# HOW TO KEEP YOUR COOL

## An Ancient Guide to Anger Management

Fig. 1: A Roman losing his cool

Seneca

Selected, translated, and introduced by James Romm

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# HOW TO KEEP YOUR COOL

ANCIENT WISDOM FOR MODERN READERS

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## An Ancient Guide to Anger Management

Seneca

*Selected, translated, and introduced by James Romm*

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# INTRODUCTION

“Your anger is a kind of madness, because you set a high price on worthless things.” Seneca the Younger wrote those words in the mid-first century AD, as the Roman principate, the system of one-man rule inaugurated by Augustus Caesar, reached its fourth generation. Seneca ostensibly addressed that thought to his elder brother Novatus but really intended it for all his Roman readers, and it continues to speak powerfully today, in an age that still struggles, more than many previous ones, to deal with insanities wrought by anger.

To better grasp what Seneca means when he defines anger as a misvaluation, try the following exercise. Recall the last minor incident that sent you into a rage. Perhaps a reckless driver cut you off and made you slam on your brakes, or someone cut in line in front of you or stole a parking spot or a cab from under your nose. You were injured—or were you? Were you notably worse off, a day or two later, than before the incident occurred? Did it really *matter* that someone disrespected you, in the way that global climate change matters? Or the threat of nuclear war? Or the fact that stars are collapsing into black holes in other parts of our galaxy, swallowing up everything around them?

The juxtaposition of the quotidian with the immeasurably vast is a favorite stratagem of Seneca’s, especially in *On Anger* (*De Ira* in Latin), the essay from which this volume is drawn. By shifting our perspective or expanding our mental scale, Seneca challenges our sense of what, if anything, is worth our getting angry. Pride, dignity, self-importance—the sources of our outrage when we feel injured—end up seeming hollow when we zoom out and see our lives from a distance: “Draw further back, and laugh” (3.37). Seneca’s great exemplars of wisdom—Socrates, the most revered sage in the Greek world, and Cato the Younger, a senator of the century preceding Seneca’s, in the Roman world—are, in this essay, seen getting spat on, knocked about, and struck on the head without expressing anger or even, it seems, feeling any.

An infringement on your car’s right of way might not matter, but your reaction to it *does*, Seneca believed. In your momentary road rage, in

your desire to honk at, hurt, or *kill* the other driver, lie grave threats to the sovereignty of reason in your soul, and therefore to your capacity for right choice and virtuous action. The onset of anger endangers your moral condition more than that of any other emotion, for anger is, in Seneca's eyes, the most intense, destructive, and irresistible of the passions. It's like jumping off a cliff: once rage is allowed to get control, there's no hope of stopping the descent. Our spiritual health demands that we let go of anger, or else it will never let go of us.

Seneca knew at first hand the perils of anger. By the time he came to write *On Anger*, or at least the greater part of it, he had witnessed, from the close vantage point of the Roman Senate, the bloody four-year reign of Caligula. (We might give other names than anger to Caligula's maladies—paranoia, say, or sadism—but Seneca, to advance his case, lumps all of that emperor's cruelties under the heading *ira*). Caligula casts a long shadow over *On Anger*; Seneca often mentions him by name, but also invokes him implicitly when he associates anger with instruments of torture, with flames and swords, and with civil strife. The nightmare of the Caligula years, it seems, had taught Seneca the high cost of unrestrained wrath, not just to the individual soul, but to the whole Roman state.

It was unusual in Rome for a philosopher and moral essayist to occupy a seat in the Senate, but Seneca was an unusual man. In youth he studied with teachers who embraced Stoicism, a system imported from Greece that counseled mental self-control and adherence to the dictates of divine Reason. He chose to follow the Stoic path, but not in any orthodox way; as a mature writer, he drew on many philosophic traditions, or else eschewed theory altogether in favor of practical ethics enhanced by rhetorical flourish. *On Anger* is a case in point: only a portion of the treatise, largely confined to the first half, is demonstrably rooted in Stoic principles. The second half, from which much of this volume is drawn, deals with the problem of anger more pragmatically, reminding us, in its most banal passages, not to overload our schedules, or take on tasks at which we're likely to fail.

Seneca, to judge by his self-presentation in his writings, was a self-reflective and inward-looking man. He describes, in one of the passages translated below (3.36), his zen-like nightly reviews of his own ethical choices—tranquil meditations conducted in the quiet of his bedroom. Yet we know that Seneca also enjoyed proximity to power and eagerly played the game of Roman politics, sometimes with disastrous results. In his thirties, he entered the Roman Senate, where he gained a reputation

as an original and compelling speaker, but his eloquence only aroused the envy of emperor Caligula, who reportedly wanted him killed (but was himself assassinated before taking action). Under Claudius, Caligula's successor, Seneca came under suspicion again and was exiled to Corsica; the charge brought against him, adultery with one of Caligula's sisters, was likely a pretext. Quite possibly *On Anger* was begun during that period of exile.

After eight years on Corsica, and the near-extinction of his political career, Seneca was recalled to Rome in AD 49 with a most important brief: instructing and guiding the thirteen-year-old Nero, Claudius's adopted son and presumptive heir. With the support of Agrippina, another of Caligula's sisters and Claudius's new wife, Seneca became more influential than ever, and also extremely rich. It was at about this time, presumably, that he completed *On Anger* (our only firm clue as to its date is that Novatus, to whom it is addressed, changed his name to Gallio in late 52 or early 53, so the treatise must have been published before that). Perhaps the work was circulated at Rome to herald its author's return there, and to advertise the humanity of the man reentering the inner circle of imperial power—much as a modern politician might publish a memoir prior to a run for higher office.

Humanity, in the sense of humaneness, is indeed the keynote of *On Anger*. To counter the impulses of anger, here defined as the desire to punish, Seneca reminds us of how much we humans have in common—above all, our forgivability. In between monsters like Caligula and saints like Socrates stand the other 99.9 percent of the human race, sinners all, yet all deserving of clemency. "Let's be kinder to one another," Seneca exhorts, in the impassioned final segment of his treatise. "We're just wicked people living among wicked people. Only one thing can give us peace, and that's a pact of mutual leniency." This theme of a shared fallibility underlying the social contract recurs often in Seneca's writings but is nowhere so clearly or so loftily expressed as here.

Seneca brought all his formidable rhetorical powers to bear in *On Anger*, sometimes chilling his readers with tales of grotesque cruelty, other times uplifting them with exhortations toward mercy, and finally leaving them haunted by the specter of death, the grim absolute that was never far from his thoughts (see *How to Die: An Ancient Guide to the End of Life* in this series). He deploys his famously seductive prose style, rendered here only with very partial fidelity, to keep us hanging on every word. (The passages in this volume do not represent "every word" but constitute less than one-third of *On Anger;* the whole may be read in

Robert Kaster's translation in the University of Chicago volume *Anger, Mercy, Revenge*.)

Seneca ended his life as the victim of a wrath he could not assuage. The emperor Nero, after more than fifteen years under Seneca's tutelage, became increasingly unstable and paranoid in the mid-60s AD, and imperial *ira* began to raise its head once again, as in the bad old days of Caligula. Seneca was linked to an assassination plot by means of contrived evidence and forced to commit suicide in AD 65.

The complexities of Seneca's life, and the sheer volume of his writings, have made him harder to embrace today than the two great Stoics who followed him, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius (see *How to be Free*, another volume in this series, for excerpts from the writings of the former.) Nevertheless his thought remains, for some, a source of inspiration and a guide toward moral awareness. In the mid-twentieth century, the psychologist Albert Ellis drew on Seneca and other Stoics in formulating his rational emotive behavior school of therapy, and in later decades Michel Foucault used Seneca's practice of daily introspection as a model for what he termed "care of the self." Under that model, ancient Stoicism has a salutary role to play in the modern world, as we seek remedies, at night in our quiet bedrooms, for our many ills of the soul.

The present volume honors the idea that Seneca was not writing only for elite Romans of the age of Nero, but for all people at all times. In an age when anger thrives, he has much to teach us.

# HOW TO KEEP YOUR COOL

*Seneca frames his essay "On Anger" as a letter to his older brother Novatus, a man who, like Seneca himself, had gone into politics and had become a senator. (Novatus would later change his name to Gallio after being adopted by a wealthy patron of that name, and he appears as Gallio in the biblical book of Acts as the Roman governor of Greece who dealt with the apostle Paul in Corinth). The single addressee is only a fiction, however, for the essay is really directed at Seneca's fellow elite Romans and can be applied even more widely today.*

You urged me, Novatus, to write about the way in which anger can be softened, and I think you are right to be most frightened of this emotion, the ugliest and most savage of all emotions. The others have some measure of peace and quiet in them, but this one rages, in turmoil and furious movement—with an eagerness hardly human—for pain, weapons, blood, and torture, until it harms others while discarding its own good. It rushes to arms and greedily seeks a vengeance that will only drag the avenger down with it. Some wise men have called anger a brief madness; in equal degrees, it is unable to govern itself, forgetful of decorum, ignorant of friendships, obstinate and intent on finishing what it begins, deaf to reason and advice, stirred up by empty provocations, unsuited to distinguishing what's just and true; it resembles nothing so much as a collapsing building that breaks apart upon that which it crushes.

But to understand that those in the grips of anger are not sane, look at how they present themselves. For just as madness shows clear signs—a brash and threatening expression, an unhappy face, a wrinkled forehead, an agitated gait, nervous hands, changed skin color, rapid and heavy breathing—just so, angry people display the same signs: their eyes burn and flash, their whole face reddens with blood that boils up from their innermost organs, their lips tremble, their teeth clench, their hair bristles and stands on end, their breath becomes labored and gasping; cracking knuckles in twisting limbs, sighs and groans and speech broken off by unintelligible noises, hands smashed together, feet pounding the earth, body agitated all over and "brandishing anger's mighty threats,"[1] an aspect foul to look on and disgusting as the afflicted contort themselves

and grow swollen. You'd be hard put to say which is the better word for this fault: "hateful" or "monstrous."

Other things can be hidden away and nurtured in secret, but anger announces itself and comes out onto the face; the greater its degree, the more openly it seethes. Don't you see how all animals, as soon as they have reared up to inflict harm, send forth signals ahead of the attack? How their entire bodies abandon their accustomed calm appearance and whet the edge of their wildness? Boars foam at the mouth, sharpening their tusks by rubbing; bulls toss their horns in the empty air, scattering sand with their hooves; lions roar, prodded snakes puff up their necks, and the faces of rabid dogs become a woeful sight. No animal is so fearsome, so noxious in nature that the onset of new savagery does not show itself as soon as anger has entered in.

Of course, I'm aware that other emotions are also hard to hide, and that lust, and fear, and bravery too give signs of their presence and can be perceived. Indeed, there's no intense arousal that enters us without altering our expressions in some way. Then what's the difference? This: while other feelings stand out, this one towers.

(1.2) But if you truly want to examine its effects, the damages it causes, I say that no plague has done more harm to humankind. You'll see slaughters, poisons, mutual mud-slinging of litigants, wreckage of cities, extinctions of whole races, lives of leading men sold at public auction,[2] torches touched to buildings, flames not contained within walls but, held by an enemy host, gleaming over vast spans of territory.[3] Look at the foundation stones of the noblest cities, now barely visible: anger toppled them. Look at the wastelands that stretch empty for many miles, without an inhabitant: anger stripped them clean. Look at leaders preserved in memory as examples of evil fate: anger stabbed this one in his own bed, struck that one down amid the sacred rites of the table, mangled another as the courts and the crowded forum watched; ordered one to offer his blood to his son's parricide, another to bare his royal neck to a slave's hand, another to split his limbs apart on the cross.[4] And these are only the tortures of individuals; what if, looking past those whom anger has scorched one by one, you could glimpse assemblies hacked by the sword, mobs cut to pieces by soldiers sent against them, whole peoples condemned to die through indiscriminate slaughter?

*There is a gap in the transmitted Latin text following the above sentence. As we know from other sources, in the missing text Seneca defined anger as a desire to punish a real or perceived wrong. That*

*definition will be important in his later discussion of how anger can be prevented or moderated.*

(1.7)[5] But, one might ask, even if anger is unnatural, shouldn't we adopt it because it's useful? After all, it lifts and gives spur to the spirits, and courage achieves no great military feat without it—that is, if its fire is not lit underneath us and its goad does not provoke the bold and send them into perils. Thus some men think it valuable to moderate anger rather than set it aside, to force it to conform to a healthy measure and restrain its overflows, to hold on to that part without which action grows weak and the force and energy of the mind is dissipated. First, however, it's easier to shut out harmful things than to govern them, easier to deny them entry than to moderate them once they have entered. Once they've established residence, they become more powerful than their overseer[6] and do not accept retrenchment or abatement. That is why Reason itself, to which the reins are entrusted, stays potent only so long as it's kept apart from the passions; if it mingles and pollutes itself with them, it can no longer restrain that which it formerly could have rebuffed. Once shaken and overthrown, the mind becomes a slave to that which drives it. In some cases, though the onset of things is in our control, that which follows drags us along by its momentum and allows us no step backward. Just as bodies in freefall have no power over themselves and cannot resist or slow their descent, but the unstoppable downrush cuts off every thought and regret, and they cannot help arriving at a place where they once could have *not* arrived—so the mind, if it launches itself into anger, or love, or the other emotions, has no chance to check its impetus; its own gravity, and the sloping nature of the vices, naturally seizes it and pulls it down to the bottom.

(1.8) It is best to repel instantly the first prickings of anger, to stamp out its very seedlings, to take pains not to be drawn in. For once it has knocked us off course, the return to health and safety is difficult; no space is left for Reason once passion has been ushered in and given jurisdiction. From that point on it will do what it wants, not what you allow. No, the foe must be fended off at the farthest borders (as it were); once it has entered and made its way through your gates, it takes its prisoners and grants no terms. The mind is no longer a thing set apart, watching the passions from a distance to stop them from going further than they should. The mind itself, now weakened and betrayed to the enemy, is changed into a passion and cannot recover its helpful and healthful power.

(1.12) “What then?” someone says.[7] “Does a good man not get angry? Even if he watches his father get killed or his mother raped?” He won’t get angry, but he’ll avenge them or he’ll protect them. Why are you afraid that duty alone, without anger’s help, will be too little motivation for him? But say this, in the same way: “What’s that? When he beholds his father or son cut to pieces, won’t the good man weep? Won’t his mind desert him?”[8] . . . The good man will carry out his duties, without fear or turmoil; he’ll act in a manner worthy of a *good* man, such that he’ll do nothing unworthy of a *man*. My father is being killed; I’ll defend him. He has *been* killed; I’ll avenge him—but because it’s right, not because I’m grieved.… To get angry on behalf of one’s kin is the mark of a weak mind, not a loyal one. It is this that is noble and worthy: for a defender to act on behalf of parents, children, and friends with his duty leading him on—willingly, judiciously and with foresight, not driven and raging.

There is no emotion more eager for vengeance than anger, and for that very reason, none *less* suited to the taking of vengeance. Over-hasty and heedless like every greedy desire, it blocks itself on the way to where it is rushing.

(1.15) To someone doling out punishment, nothing is less suitable than anger. A penalty is more useful for correction when the judgment imposing it is more sound.[9] Thus it was that Socrates said to his slave, “I would beat you if I weren’t angry.” He postponed punishment of the slave to a saner moment; at *that* time, he reproached himself. So whose passions can ever be kept moderate, when even Socrates did not dare surrender to anger?

(1.20) And we must not even suppose that anger contributes in any way to greatness. That’s not greatness but mere swelling, just as a disease, in bodies distended by an excess of unhealthy fluid, is not “growth” but a noxious overflow. Everyone who’s transported beyond mortal thinking by an insane mind believes he’s breathing in something elevated and sublime. But there’s nothing firm underneath; things that grow without foundations are likely to slide into ruin. Anger has nothing on which it can lean; it arises from nothing steady or durable.… “What then? Don’t words that seem to have come from a great mind issue forth from angry people?” No, rather, from those who don’t know what true greatness is, just like that dread and hateful expression “Let them hate, so long as they fear.”[10] . . . Do you think that was spoken by a great spirit? You’re wrong; that was not greatness but monstrosity.

There is no reason to trust the words of angry people, which make loud and menacing noise despite the great timidity of the mind that lies beneath. There is no reason to regard as true that phrase found in the works of Livy, a most learned author: “A man of great more than good nature.”[11] Those things can’t be separated. Either his nature was good as well or it wasn’t great, since I know greatness of soul to be something unshakable, solid to the core, just, and firm from the bottom up, such that it can’t exist in evil natures. Sure, terrible and turbulent and lethal things *can* exist, but they won’t have greatness, the foundation of which is strength and goodness. They will give the *illusion* of greatness with their speech, their effort and all their external show; they will shout out something that you might *think* belongs to a great mind—like Caligula: angered at the sky because its clamor interrupted the pantomimes (which he was more eagerly mimicking than watching!), and because his revels were terrorized by thunderbolts (entirely too poorly aimed!), he summoned Jupiter to battle; and when there was no letup, he declaimed that famous line of Homer’s: “You throw me, or I’ll throw you.”[12] What madness that was! Either he thought he couldn’t be harmed even by Jupiter himself or he thought that he could harm even Jupiter. I imagine that his utterance added to the impetus of the minds of those who conspired to kill him,[13] for it seemed the height of forbearance to put up with a man who couldn’t put up with Jupiter.

(1.21) Thus there’s nothing great or noble in anger, not even when it seems brash and scornful of both men and gods. Or, if it seems that anger *does* bring forth greatness of mind in anyone, then so would extravagance, for it likes to be held up by ivory, dressed in purples, and covered in gold; to move lands from place to place, dam up oceans, turn rivers into waterfalls, build forests in the air.[14] Then, greed too would *seem* to come from a great mind, for it lies down on heaps of gold and silver, tends fields that are called “provinces,” holds estates under single managers that stretch out farther than what consuls get assigned.[15] Lust would *seem* to come from a great mind, since it swims across straits, castrates whole crowds of boys,[16] goes under a husband’s sword with no regard for death.… All these things, no matter how far they go, how far they extend themselves, are really small, base, and lowly. Virtue alone is elevated and lofty. Nothing is great unless it’s also at peace.

*Having dealt up to now with anger in the abstract—its definition and qualities—Seneca turns, in the second half of his treatise, toward a*

*pragmatic discussion of how to stop anger from getting hold of us, and how to manage it once it does. He begins with advice to parents on how to raise children so as to produce adults who are not prone to anger.*

(2.18) Since we have explored the questions that result from anger, let's move on to its remedies. These are two, I believe: not falling into an angry state and, once there, not doing wrong. Just as, in the care of the body, some therapies deal with maintaining health and others with restoring it, so we ought to use one method to fend off anger, another to suppress it. First, as to how to avoid it, we'll look at certain teachings that concern the whole of human life, dividing them up into "raising of children" and "what comes after."

Child-rearing demands the greatest effort, for that effort will return a very great benefit; it's easy to mold minds that are still pliable. But ills that have taken root in us are retrenched only with difficulty.

(2.21) A very great benefit, I say, will come from raising children in a healthy way. But it's a difficult program, since we must make an effort neither to nurture anger in them nor to blunt their natural impulses. Careful observation is needed, for that which must be supported and that which must be suppressed are nurtured by similar things, and being similar, they can easily fool you even as you monitor them. The spirit flourishes when it is given license and shrinks under servitude; it shoots up if it is given praise and encouraged to value itself highly. But license and praise also give rise to arrogance and an angry temperament. We must steer a middle course, pulling back on the reins at one moment, applying the goad the next. Let children's spirits encounter nothing lowly or slavish. Let them never beg for things in the manner of a suppliant, and if they do, let them not gain anything by it. Rather let gifts be made on the basis of their circumstances, the things they have already done, and the good things they promise to do in the future.

In contests with their peers, let's not allow children to be defeated, nor to grow angry; let's see that they are close acquaintances of those with whom they contend, so that they get accustomed to wanting to win rather than to hurt. Whenever they win and do something worthy of praise, let's allow them to hold their heads high but not to become boastful, for exultation follows rejoicing, and after exultation comes inflated ego and too great a sense of self-worth. We will give them a certain amount of leisure, but we won't untether them for idleness and laziness, and we'll keep them far from the influence of the pleasures, for nothing will make adults more prone to anger than a soft and cloying upbringing. Thus the

more an only child is indulged, or the more that's permitted to an orphaned ward, the more corrupt the mind becomes. The one who was never denied anything, whose tears a worried mother wiped away, for whose sake a babysitter got the blame, will have no resources against shocks to the system. Don't you see how a greater wrathfulness accompanies a greater fortune? It's clear in the case of the rich, the nobility, and office holders that whenever something light and empty arises in the mind, it gathers momentum like a ship with a favorable breeze. Prosperity nurtures the angry temperament, when a crowd of yes-men whispers in arrogant ears, "Can *he* talk that way to *you*? You're not taking the measure of your full stature; you sell yourself short," and other things that even healthy minds, built on strong foundations from the start, have scarcely resisted.

Let childhood be kept far away from flattery; let it hear the truth. Let it feel fear now and then, respect always, and let it learn to rise before elders. Let it not obtain anything by getting angry; what's refused to the whiner should be freely given to the child who keeps silent. Let him keep his parents' wealth in view but not in use. Let him be upbraided for any falsehoods. It will be important too that he be given teachers and attendants who are calm, since everything gentle attaches itself to what lies adjacent and grows to resemble those things; the characters of young adults thereafter recall those of their nurses and sitters.

A boy who was brought up in Plato's household, and was then returned to his parents, saw his father shouting. "I never saw this at Plato's house," he said.[17] And I don't doubt that he sooner imitated his father than Plato.

Let his diet be meager, his clothing modest, and his lifestyle equal to that of his peers. He won't be angry at being compared with others if you've put him on a par with many from the outset.

*Seneca turns from child-rearing to the case of adults, whose temperaments are already fully formed. Relying on his initial definition of anger as the desire to punish a perceived wrong, Seneca explores various ways we can avoid the sense of having been wronged. This discussion leads him into some remarkable formulations of the universal fallibility of the human race and the imperative this creates to extend mercy toward wrongdoers.*

(2.22) But these things are relevant to our children; in our case, the lot into which we were born, and our upbringing, no longer gives an

opening for either error or improvement; we must lay out instead what follows after.

So: since we ought to fight against first causes, the cause of anger is the sense of having been wronged; but one ought not to trust this sense. Don't make your move right away, even against what seems overt and plain; sometimes false things give the appearance of truth. One must take one's time; a day reveals the truth. And don't give accusers ready access to your ears, but take note of this flaw in human nature and always suspect it: what we hate to hear, we readily believe, and we grow angry before we use our judgment. Think then: what if we are driven to act, not by accusations, but by mere suspicions, and grow angry at the guiltless because we read the worst into someone's facial expression or laughter?

No, we must plead the case of the absent defendant despite our own interests,[18] and we must hold back anger pending judgment. A punishment that's delayed can still be imposed, but once imposed, it can't be withdrawn.

(2.24) Credulity is the source of most evil. Often you should refuse to even listen, for being deceived is better than being mistrustful. Suspicion and inference, those most misleading incitements, must be banished from the mind: "This man greeted me with too little courtesy; that one did not linger in my embrace; that one cut me off when I had just started talking; that one seemed to turn his face from me more than usual." There will be no lack of rationale to back up this suspicion. Let's trust only that which we can see, plainly, with our own eyes; and whenever our suspicion turns out to be hollow, let's punish our credulity, for that castigation will instill a habit of not trusting easily.

(2.25) From this it also follows that we should not get annoyed by tiny and very petty things. Your slave is not quick enough, or the water you're about to drink is too warm, or your bed is messy, or your table has been set too sloppily: to get exercised at these things is madness. It is sick people, those of weak constitutions, whom a gentle breeze makes shiver; it is those with eye problems who are disturbed at seeing brightly colored clothes; those spoiled by luxury whose sides ache after doing unaccustomed work.

They tell of a certain Mindyrides, a citizen of Sybaris, who, when he saw someone digging a ditch and swinging his mattock very high, complained that *he* was getting exhausted, and told the man not to do that work in his sight. The same man complained he was doing poorly because he had slept on rose petals that had been folded over double.

Where self-indulgence has ruined both the body and mind, nothing seems bearable, not because the task is hard but because the one doing it is soft. What reason is there for someone's cough or sneeze, or a fly shooed away too negligently, to drive one into a mad rage? Or a dog getting underfoot, or a key dropped by a careless slave? Will he bear with calm mind the reproaches of his city, or the curses hurled at him in the Senate or the court, if his ears are grated by the squeal of a chair being dragged across the floor? Will he put up with hunger, or the thirst of a summertime journey, if he grows angry at the slave who does a bad job mixing in the melted snow?[19] Nothing nurtures anger so much as luxury that lacks restraint and can't stand setbacks. The mind must be roughly treated so that it does not feel any blows except the heavy ones.

(2.26) We get angry either at those we can't be hurt by or else by those we can. In the former category are certain things that lack sensation, like a book that we've often thrown down because its lettering was too small, or torn up because it had mistakes; or like clothing that we've shredded because it didn't please us. How foolish, to get angry at things that neither merit our anger nor feel it! "But, naturally, the ones who made them are the source of our offense." First of all, we often get angry before we have acknowledged this distinction to ourselves. Second, perhaps the craftsmen themselves will bring forward reasonable excuses: one was unable to do any better than he did, and anyway it wasn't to spite you that he had too little training. Another did as he did for reasons other than to offend you. Finally, what is more insane than to vent on mere things the spleen one has saved up for people? To get angry at things that are not alive is the mark of a madman, just as it is to get angry at dumb animals that do us no wrong (because they can't have that desire; there's no wrong done if it doesn't proceed from an intent).

(2.28) If we want to be fair judges of all matters, let's convince ourselves first of all of this: none of us is without guilt. The greatest outrage arises from this attitude: "I've committed no wrong" and "I didn't do anything." No, it's only that you don't *admit* to anything. We take umbrage at receiving any admonition or punishment, even though we are doing wrong at that very moment, by adding arrogance and presumption to our misdeeds. Who can proclaim themselves innocent under any and all laws? And even if this is possible, how narrow is innocence if it only means being good in legal terms! How much further does the measure of one's duties extend than that of the law! How many things are demanded—by piety, humanity, generosity, justice, and loyalty—that go beyond the law codes on public display!

But we can’t even hold ourselves to this narrowest definition of innocence.[20] We’ve done some things, planned others, hoped for others, and abetted still others. In some cases, we’re innocent only because things didn’t work out. So let’s think on this and be fairer to criminals, and let’s also credit those who upbraid us. Let’s not be angry at good people, for who will we *not* be angry at, if we rage at the good? . . . Someone will say he’s been maligned by you; consider then whether you started it, consider how many people you *do* talk about. Let’s look at it this way, I ask: in some cases, people are not doing us an injury but returning one; in others, they’re acting in our best interest; in others, they’re acting under compulsion; in others, they don’t realize what they’re doing. Or, even if they act willingly and knowingly, their goal is not to injure us when they do so. Perhaps someone stumbled out of a wish to please us with flattery, or perhaps he did what he did not to oppose us but because he couldn’t pursue his own goals without keeping us down.[21] Flattery is cloying but often rubs people the wrong way.

Those who recall how often they fell under false suspicion, in how many cases it happened that doing their duty came to look like doing wrong, how many people they started to love after hating—these people will be able to avoid rushing into anger, especially if they silently tell themselves in each instance where they’ve been wronged: “I’ve done this myself also.”

But where will you find so fair-minded a judge? The same man who lusted after every married woman, and thinks the fact that she’s the wife of another is a sufficient reason to love her, will not have his own wife looked at; the one who most urgently demands your trust is himself faithless; the chastiser of lies is forsworn; the one who brings false charges takes it very ill when he himself is sued; the master who doesn’t want the chastity of slaves to be assailed won’t leave his own slave girl alone. We hold the flaws of others before our eyes but turn our backs toward our own. Thus a father who’s worse than his son condemns his son’s dinner parties, though they’re not excessive; the man who denies nothing to his own extravagance forgives nothing in another’s; the tyrant grows angry at the murderer; the temple robber punishes theft. The majority of humankind gets angry not at the wrongs but at the wrongdoers. A good look at ourselves will make us more temperate if we ask ourselves: “Haven’t we ourselves also done something like that? Haven’t we gone astray in the same way? Does condemning these things really benefit us?”

(2.29) Delay is the greatest remedy for anger. Ask of your anger, at the outset, not to grant forgiveness but to exercise judgment. Its first impulses are harsh ones; it will relent if it waits. And don't try to get rid of it all at once; it will be wholly defeated if it is carved away by pieces.

Of the things that give us offense, some are reported and others we witness with our own eyes and ears. First, in regard to reports, we should not be quick to believe them. Many lie to deceive us, and many because they themselves are deceived.… If you were going to adjudicate a case involving even a tiny sum, the trial wouldn't proceed without witnesses, and the witnesses' testimony wouldn't count unless they were sworn in, and you'd give both sides a chance to plead their case; you'd take your time and not decide in one hearing. Truth gets shinier the more frequently it is handled.[22] Do you condemn a friend on the spur of the moment? Will you get angry before you hear him out, before you question him, before he's allowed to know his accuser or his crime? Have you already heard [what] both sides have to say?

(2.30) Second come the things we witness ourselves. In these cases, we will examine the nature and intent of those who do them. Say it's your child: chalk it up to his age; he doesn't know that what he did was wrong. Your father: either he's done so much to help you that he's earned the right to also do wrong, or perhaps it's his very merit that offends us. She's a woman: she made a mistake.[23] He was ordered to do it: who but an unfair man becomes angry at what's necessary? He had been hurt: it's no injury if you suffer what you did to him first. He's a judge: you would do better to trust his opinion than your own. He's a king: if you're guilty and he punishes you, yield to justice; if you're innocent, yield to your fate.[24] It's an animal that can't speak, or nearly so: you are doing just what *it* does, by getting angry. It's an illness or a catastrophe: it will pass more gently if you bear up. It's a god: you waste your effort just as much by getting angry at a god as by praying for a god to be angry at someone else. It's a good man that harms you: don't believe it. It's a bad man: don't be surprised. He'll pay to another the penalty that he owes to you,[25] and indeed he already penalizes himself by doing wrong.[26]

(2.31) There are two things, as I have discussed, that stir up anger: first, if we seem to have been harmed (I've discussed this already); second, if we seem to have been harmed unjustly. It's this second point that needs to be discussed. People deem things unjust if they ought not to have suffered them, or, in some cases, if they did not expect to. We think things undeserved if they were unanticipated, and so those that happen

contrary to our hopes and expectations disturb us most of all; there's no other reason why the smallest problems in our home life offend us, and we call "wrong" an oversight committed by a friend. "Then why," someone says, "do injuries from enemies prick us?" Because we didn't expect them, or at least not in such great degree. Our too great self-love means that we think we ought to be safe from harms done even by our enemies. Each of us has the spirit of a king inside us: we want total freedom to be granted to us but not to those acting against us. It's either our ignorance or our arrogance that makes us prone to anger. For what is so surprising if wicked people do wicked things? What is unusual if an enemy wounds us while a friend merely gives offense, or a slave sins while a son merely makes a mistake? Fabius[27] used to say that the basest excuse for a commanding officer is "I didn't think it would happen," but I say it's the basest for anyone. Think everything might happen; anticipate everything. Even in good characters there is something rather unsavory. Human nature contains treacherous thoughts, ungrateful ones, greedy and wicked ones. When you assess the character of one person, consider that of the populace. Your greatest fear lies in the same place as your greatest joy. When everything seems serene, the dangers are still present, only sleeping. Always suppose that something offensive to you is going to arise.[28] The helmsman, even in safety, never unfurls his sails so fully that he puts away the gear he needs to reef them up again.

Consider this above all: the power to do harm is foul, accursed, and very much foreign to humankind, a race whose kindness tames even wild creatures. Just look at the necks of elephants lowered to the yoke, the backs of bulls trodden safely by somersaulting boys and women,[29] the snakes slithering among drinking cups and in the folds of clothing with a harmless glide, the snouts of domesticated bears and lions that stay calm as they are stroked, the wild beasts that fawn on their master. For us to exchange our nature with such animals would bring shame!

It's an atrocity to harm one's country, and thus to harm any citizen, for he is a part of one's country. The parts of a thing are sacred, if the whole is deserving of reverence. Thus it's a sin to harm any human being, for that person is a citizen in your larger "city." How would it be if your hands wanted to harm your feet, or your eyes to harm your hands? Just as all the limbs operate in harmony with one another, since the whole benefits from the preservation of the parts, so human beings keep from harming individuals, since they are created for unity; society cannot be kept intact except by care and love of its constituent pieces. We wouldn't

even eradicate vipers and water moccasins and other creatures that hurt us with bites and blows if we could make them tame henceforth or arrange that they wouldn't be a danger to ourselves or to others; in the same way, we will not harm a human being because he *has done* wrong, but in order that he *not do* wrong; punishment will be addressed to the future, not the past, for it acts out of concern, not anger. For if a penalty were demanded for everyone whose nature is warped and capable of evil, then punishment would leave no one untouched.

(2.32) "But," someone says, "anger gives a certain pleasure, and it's sweet to pay someone back for causing pain." Not at all true. Giving harm for harm is not such as in the case of transactions, where it's honorable to make recompense in kind.[30] In those situations, it's shameful to be bested, but in the former, it's shameful to win. "Revenge" is a word unworthy of human beings, even if it's believed to be a just thing.… A certain man, unwittingly, in the public bath collided carelessly with Marcus Cato[31] (for who would have ever harmed that man knowingly?). Afterward, when he apologized, Cato said, "I don't remember being bumped." He thought it better not to realize than to take revenge. "But," you ask, "did nothing bad happen to that man after such great insolence?" No indeed, something very *good*: he made the acquaintance of Cato! It is the mark of a great mind to disregard injuries; it's the most insulting way to take revenge if the man from whom one seeks vengeance doesn't even seem worth the trouble. Many have raised small slights to a higher level by avenging them. By contrast, he is a great and noble person who, like a huge wild animal, listens without concern as the little hunting dogs yap.

(2.33) But the argument goes, "We will be less looked down on if we avenge the wrong done to us." If we reach that point, that remedy as it were, let's get there without anger, regarding vengeance as something useful, not pleasant. What's more, it is often better to pretend, rather than to get payback. The wrongs done by the powerful should be received not just patiently but with a cheerful expression, for if they think they've achieved their goal, they'll do it again. Those whose minds have grown scornful due to their great fortunes have this as their worst failing: those whom they've hurt, they also hate. There's that very famous saying of a man who had grown old serving under monarchs. When someone asked him how he'd obtained that thing which is most rare at court—old age—he said "By accepting hurts and saying thank you."

Often it is so disadvantageous to avenge a wrong that it's advantageous to not even admit one has occurred. Caligula once held in custody the son of a distinguished Roman knight, Pastor, and grew annoyed at the young man's elegance and very well-groomed hair.[32] When the boy's father asked that, for his sake, the boy be kept safe, Caligula, acting as though that request had been a suggestion of capital punishment, ordered the boy brought up for summary execution. Then, in order not to seem cruel toward the father in *every* way, he invited Pastor to dinner that day. Pastor arrived, his face showing no displeasure. The emperor had a cask of wine sent to him and set a guard over him. Pastor, though wretched, summoned the strength to drink it; it felt like drinking his son's blood. Caligula sent him a festive ointment and garlands to wear, and ordered the guard to watch whether he would use them; he did. On the very day when he had laid out his son for burial (or rather, could *not* lay him out), Pastor reclined and reveled in a crowd of a hundred, a gout-stricken old man downing drinks that would scarcely be suitable for his children's birthdays. All the while he shed no tear and allowed no sign of grief to burst forth; he banqueted as though celebrating the success of his plea for his son. Why did he do it, you ask? He had *another* son.… I would have had scorn for the father if he had merely been afraid, but the fact is that a sense of duty suppressed his anger. He deserved to be allowed to leave the banquet and gather up his son's bones, but Caligula, that generous and kindly young man,[33] did not allow even this. He kept on provoking the old man with more and more toasts, bidding him lighten his cares. Pastor, for his part, gave the appearance of cheerfulness and of having forgotten what had happened that day. If he had displeased the butcher as a dining companion, his other son would have been a goner.

(2.34) We must, then, hold back our anger, whether the one who needs to be taken on is our equal, our better, or our inferior. To fight with an equal is a chancy affair; with a better, insane; with an inferior, tawdry. It is the act of a cowardly and base person to seek redress from one who bites him. Mice and ants turn to face you if you raise your hand to them; only weak things think they're being wounded if they're touched. It will make us gentler if we consider how that person, the one we're angry at, has helped us in the past; his offense will win pardon from his merits. Keep this too in mind: how much praise a reputation for mercy will bring us, how many people our kindness will turn into valuable friends. And let's not be angry at the children of our enemies and foes; it's one of the examples of Sulla's cruelty that he removed from the citizen rolls the

children of those he proscribed.[34] There's nothing more unjust than for someone to become the heir of hatred incurred by his father.

Let's consider, every time we find it hard to forgive, whether it's to our benefit that everyone be implacable. How often has the one who refused mercy later sought it? How often has someone thrown himself at the feet of the man he earlier spurned from his own? What is more glorious than to change one's wrath into friendship? Whom do the Roman people consider more trustworthy allies than those they once considered the most obstinate foes? What would our empire be today, if a wholesome foresight had not intermingled the conquered with the conquerors?[35] Someone gets angry; have at him with your good deeds. The quarrel immediately drops away if abandoned by either side; there's no fight unless on equal terms. Anger flares up on both sides and there's a clash: the better party is the one that steps back first; it's the "winner" who's defeated. Someone hits you: retreat. By getting violent in return, you'll only give an opening and a pretext for more frequent violence, and you won't be able to get free of it later when you want to.

(2.35) Surely no one would choose to hit a foe so hard as to have his hand get stuck in the wound and be unable to withdraw from the blow. But anger is a weapon of just this type; it's hard to draw it back. We look for weapons that will serve us well, a sword that's well-fitted and easy to hold; won't we then steer clear of mental impulses that are weighty, burdensome, and unable to be pulled back? Momentum is pleasing if it stops in its tracks when ordered, doesn't run past the boundaries we have set, and can be steered and brought back on track as it goes. We recognize that our muscles are diseased when they move without our wishing; an old man is weak in body if he runs when he wants to walk; let's likewise consider our own movements of the mind to be at their healthiest and strongest if they proceed according to *our* will rather than being borne along by their own.

But nothing will be as beneficial as looking first at the ugliness of the thing, then at its dangerousness. No face produced by any emotion is more disturbed than anger's: it mars the loveliest visages, contorts the most serene expressions.[36] All propriety abandons the wrathful; if their togas are well and properly arranged, they rip off their clothes and destroy all care of their persons; if they have a charming couture, arranged either by nature or art, their hair bristles along with their minds; their veins bulge, their chests quake with rapid breathing, their necks are stretched out by violent outbursts of shouting, their limbs tremble, their

hands flit about, their whole body is in fluid motion. What sort of mind lies within, do you think, if the outer appearance is so grotesque? . . . Just like the look of those dripping from the slaughter of wild beasts or enemies, or of those going forth to slaughter them, or just like the monsters of the underworld imagined by the poets, girt with serpents and fiery exhalation; just like those foulest of goddesses[37] when they leave the world below to stir up wars, to strew conflict among the peoples and to destroy peace—let's depict anger just so, its eyes burning with fire; a cacophony of hissing, groaning, wailing, shrieking and any other sound more hateful than these; shaking spears with both hands (no concern about covering itself with a shield), twisted, bloody, filled with scars and bruises from raining blows on itself, striding crazily, surrounded by dense dust clouds, attacking, laying waste, harrying, oppressed by the hatred of all and of itself most of all, wanting the destruction of lands, seas, and sky if it cannot cause harm any other way, as noxious as it is despised. Or, if you'll permit me, let's have anger be like what our poets describe:[38] "Bellona, brandishing a bloodied whip in her right hand" or "Discord goes rejoicing, her cloak torn to shreds" or any more dread image of this dread emotion that can be conjured up.

(2.36) As Sextius says,[39] it has often been useful to angry people to look in a mirror. The great transformation in themselves has disturbed them; they have no longer recognized themselves, yet how little of their true deformity was displayed in the image reflected by the mirror! If the mind could be revealed and could shine out in some concrete form, it would astonish those who saw it—black, spotted, roiling, twisted, swollen. As things are, its ugliness is so extreme, as it seeps through bones and flesh and so many things in its path; what would it look like if laid bare?

But, you may not believe that anyone has been frightened out of his angry state by a mirror. Why is that? Simple: whoever comes to a mirror to change himself has already changed. . . .

It is more important to look at how many people have been injured by anger's very nature. Many have burst their veins with excessive fury; their shouts, greater than they had strength for, have brought up blood, and the teardrops surging violently into their eyes have dimmed the sharpness of their sight; sick, they have slid back into disease. There is no swifter road to madness. Many have persisted in the frenzy of anger and have never recovered the mind they have banished; frenzy drove Ajax to his death, and it was anger that drove him into frenzy.[40] They

call down death on their children, poverty on themselves, and ruin on their households, and they deny their own anger just as raving men do their insanity. Foes to their closest friends, pariahs to their nearest and dearest, heedless of laws except those by which they can do harm, responsive to every slight, hard to approach either with speech or dutiful attention, they use force for every task, ready both to wield their swords in battle and to fall upon them.

For a very great evil has seized them, one that exceeds all other vices; the others creep in little by little, but this one's onrush is sudden and total. It ends by subjecting all other emotions to itself. It conquers the most passionate love, for the enraged have impaled the bodies of those they loved and then have lain in the embraces of those they killed. Even greed, the toughest and least malleable of evils, gets trodden down by anger, driven to scatter its wealth to the winds and to torch its house and heaped-up possessions. What else? Haven't the ambitious tossed aside the badges of office they valued so highly and rejected the honor that was bestowed on them? There is no emotion that anger does not overmaster.

*Book 3 contains further practical advice for dealing with anger and teaches ways "to not get angry, . . . to stop anger once it's begun, and . . . to cure other people's anger," according to the scheme announced in 3.5. But before we reach that point, Seneca reminds us yet again of how destructive a force anger is.*

(3.1) We will try now to do what you most desired, Novatus: to cut anger out of the mind, or at least to rein it in and restrain its onrushes. This action must sometimes be taken openly and overtly, when the force of the malady is first felt, and at other times in secret, when it burns too hot and grows and toughens with every hindrance. It matters how great its powers are and how intact, to determine whether we must beat it down and drive it backward or whether we ought to yield to it while the storm is first raging, lest it carry off with itself its own cures.

We must also lay plans according to each person's nature. Entreaties win over some, while others abuse and attack those who humble themselves; others still we can frighten into a calm state. Scolding can divert some from the course they've set out on, confession, others, shame still others, and then there's delay, a slow remedy for an evil that moves at breakneck speed, which ought to be used as a last resort. Other emotions accept postponement and can be tended to more slowly, but the

violence of this one, once it’s aroused and whips itself up, doesn’t advance little by little but becomes full-blown as soon as it’s begun. It doesn’t have the same way of goading minds as the other vices do; it drags them away, deprives them of self-control, drives them into longing for a harm that will afflict all, provokes rage against not only its target but whatever comes in its way. Other vices push our minds forward, but anger pitches them headlong. Other feelings may be impossible to withstand, but they come to a stop; this one gains more and more strength, just like thunderbolts, tornadoes, and other things that don’t just move but plummet and thus can’t be called back. Other vices depart from rationality, this one from sanity. Others make gradual inroads and undetected increases, but our minds *vault* into anger.

(3.2) Anger bypasses no time of life, makes no exception for race. Some peoples have been graced by want and have never known luxury; others, who keep in training and on the move, escape all indolence; others have a crude and rustic way of life and know nothing of forgery, cheating, and the many evils arising in the forum. But there is no race that’s not goaded by anger. It’s as powerful among Greeks as among barbarians, as harmful among those who fear laws as among those whose only legal codes are the law of the stronger.

Then too, while other vices undo us one by one, this one emotion sometimes strikes en masse. Never did an entire populace burn with love of a woman, nor did a whole nation ever grasp at the hope of money or treasure. Ambition takes hold of us one at a time, person by person, and recklessness is not an evil that afflicts the public. But often a whole crowd has lined up to march into anger. Men, women, old men, youths, aristocrats, commoners—all have shared the same feeling; a vast mob, spurred on by only a few words, has surged past even the one who spurred them; there’s a headlong dash for weapons and torches and wars declared against neighbors or waged against fellow citizens. Whole households are burned up along with their family lines, and the speaker once held in high honor for his esteemed style becomes the target of his audience’s wrath. Army units turn their spears against their own general, the common people split from the nobles. The Senate has chosen men to act on its impulsive rage, without a draft being held or a commander chosen, and after chasing leading men through the houses of the city, has imposed punishment with its own hand. Ambassadors are harmed—a breaking of the custom of nations—and a monstrous frenzy carries away the citizens, with no delay allotted for the fever to abate; fleets are launched straightaway, their decks laden with hastily assembled soldiery;

and the people, led out by the impulse of their anger, not pausing for due custom or the taking of auspices, wielding whatever came to hand in place of true weapons, in the end have paid the price of their reckless, heedless anger: enormous bloodshed.

(3.4.4) So won't everyone want to call themselves back from anger's borders, once they understand that its first onset is to their detriment? Don't you want me to advise those people who wield anger from the height of power, who think it a testament to their strength, who reckon a ready revenge to be one of the great benefits of great wealth, that he who is a prisoner of anger cannot be called powerful, or even free? Don't you want me to warn them—so that they'll each be more careful and look after themselves—that while other mental ills afflict the worst sort, wrathfulness seeps into even the well-educated and those who are otherwise sound? It has reached the point that some call wrathfulness a sign of honesty, and the one who submits to anger is widely considered a very free spirit.

(3.5) "But what's the point of this?" you ask. The point is for no one to think himself safe from anger, when Nature summons even gentle and peaceable people into cruelty and violence. Just as bodily strength and diligent care of one's health give no help against plague—which indeed attacks the weak and the vigorous indiscriminately—so anger poses as much risk to high-strung natures as to relaxed and composed ones (and it's even uglier and more dangerous in the latter, to the degree that it wreaks greater changes in them). But since it's crucial, first, not to get angry; second, to stop anger once it's begun; and third, to cure other people's anger, I'll first discuss how we may avoid falling into an angry state, then how we may free ourselves from it, and lastly how we may restrain and calm angry persons and lead them back to mental health.

We will ensure that we not become angry if we put before our eyes all the vices anger gives rise to and take good measure of them. We must accuse and condemn anger, scrutinize its crimes and expose it to the light of day, compare it with the worst evils so that we can see clearly what it is. Greed, for example, gets hold of things and piles them up, so that one can better make use of them; but anger squanders things and rarely comes without cost. How many slaves does the angry master drive into flight! How much more does he lose by getting angry than he lost from the matter that angered him! Anger brings grief to fathers, divorce to spouses, hatred to officials, defeat to candidates. It's a worse sin than luxury, since that vice is enjoyed by personal pleasure, whereas anger takes joy in another's pain. It surpasses malice and envy, since those only

want someone to be unhappy, while anger wants to *make* them so; those delight in ills that chance to happen, while anger can't wait for bad luck; it wants to harm those it hates rather than watch them be harmed. There's nothing more grievous than fights, and anger stirs these up. There's nothing more dire than war, and the anger of the powerful bursts forth into war; but even anger belonging to the commoner and the private person is a war, except a war without weapons or force. Moreover, anger —if we may deal separately with the things that result from it, the suffering, the treachery, the ceaseless worry over interpersonal battles— pays the penalty it demands. It betrays the nature of humankind, since that nature urges us to love, but anger urges us to hate; human nature bids us help others, but anger, to harm.

(3.6) There is no proof of greatness so sure as when nothing that can occur can provoke you. The higher and more ordered part of the universe, the part near the stars, is not forced down toward the clouds nor driven into a storm nor whipped into a whirlwind; it is completely without turmoil, while lower levels get the thunderbolts. In the same way, the lofty mind, ever calm, situated in a tranquil resting place, keeping down below itself all things that anger it, is moderate and reverend and well ordered. None of that is true of the angry man. For who has not cast off shame the moment he surrenders to anguish and begins raving? Who has not given up what respectability he had when he grew frenzied with impulse and attacked someone? Who, when provoked, has kept good track of the number and sequence of his duties? Who has governed his tongue? Who has held back any part of his body? Who has been able to govern himself when he's been set loose from restraint?

We will benefit from that helpful precept of Democritus,[41] showing us that tranquility lies in not undertaking tasks, either in public or private, that are either numerous or greater than our resources. For those who dash about doing a multitude of tasks, no day goes by so fortunately that some problem does not arise, either from a person or a thing, to whet their minds for anger. Just as, when we hasten about through the city's crowded places, we will inevitably bump into many people and get tripped up in one spot, delayed in another, spattered with mud in a third, so too in this scattered and unmoored lifestyle, many obstacles and many disputes will crop up in our path: one person cheats us of our hopes, another delays their fulfillment, a third blocks them; our undertakings do not follow the course we had set. Fortune is not so partial to anyone as to make every path easy when we are attempting many things. The result is

that when some things fall out opposite to our intent, we lose patience with both people and things and get angry for the most trivial reasons, with a person, with a task, with a place, with Fortune, with ourselves. So, for the mind to be able to stay peaceful, it must not be scattered or worn out by the conduct of many different things, as I've said, or of major things, or of things that it reaches for beyond its grasp. We can easily fit light yokes to our necks and move our cargo here or there without slipping, but when we've been loaded up, by other people's hands, with things we can barely carry, we get overwhelmed and dump them as soon as we can; even while we are standing beneath the burden, we totter, unable to bear the weight.

(3.7.2) Whenever you attempt something, take your own measure along with that of what you're attempting and of your own preparation; regret for an incomplete task will leave you irritable. It is important too to know one's own temperament, whether it's spirited or torpid and downcast; failure generates anger in the noble, but melancholy in the retiring and passive. Let's undertake things that are neither small nor bold and impudent; our hopes should venture only next door. Let's try for nothing that, were we to attain it, we would find our own success amazing.

(3.8) Let's make an effort not to feel wronged, since we don't know how to bear that feeling. We should spend our time with those who are calmest, most easygoing, and least anxious and depressed, since we take on the natures of our associates; just as some diseases jump over onto those we have touched, so the mind infects those closest to us with its evils. The drunkard instills a love of hard drink in his fellows, the company of lechers softens even a strong man born from flint, greed spreads its contagion to those who come near it. But virtues follow the same principle, in their own way: they make mild all things they hold in their grasp; there is no beneficial place or healthy climate that has ever benefited the body as much as the company of a better crowd benefits unsteady minds. To see this point as clearly as you can, just look at how wild animals get accustomed to our society, and how not even a huge beast holds on to its aggression if it has lived with people a long time. All its savagery is blunted and forgotten, little by little, amid more peaceful surroundings.

There is the further point that one becomes better, not only by example from living among calm people, but also by not coming upon reasons for getting angry and thus not strengthening one's own vice. For these reasons we ought to run from all those who we know are going to

stir up our anger. “Who are they?” you ask. They are many, arriving at the same outcome by different routes: the arrogant ones will offend you with their scorn, the acerbic with their insults, the impudent with their slights, the spiteful with their malice, the belligerent with their quarrels, the boastful and false with their vanity; you’ll find unbearable that you’re feared by the mistrustful, bested by the unrelenting, sniffed at by the fussy. Choose then the company of the straightforward, the easygoing, the mild, who neither provoke your anger nor put up with it. Even more to our benefit are those who are humble, humane, and sweet, but not to the point of fawning, for too much agreement gives offense to angry natures. I once had a friend who was a good man, but too quick to get angry; sweet talk was just as dangerous around him as fighting words. Then there’s Caelius,[42] who, as everyone knows, was a very anger-prone orator. They say that once a client of his, a man of outstanding patience, was dining with him in his chambers, where, being thrown together in close quarters, he found it hard to avoid getting into a scrape as the two rubbed elbows. He thought it best to merely follow along with whatever his host said and play the yes-man. But Caelius couldn’t endure his acquiescence. “Contradict me, so we can be two separate people!” he shouted. But even Caelius soon gave up, angered because his guest wasn’t angered and he had no opponent.

If we’re aware of our own wrathfulness, let’s prefer such men as friends, that is, those who will take their cue from whatever we say or whatever look we give. They’ll spoil us and get us into the bad habit of hearing nothing against our wishes, but it will help us that their own flaw gives us some rest and breathing room. Grouches and bullies will put up with a flatterer; nothing is harsh or severe toward the one who strokes nothing.

Whenever an argument goes on too long and gets heated, we should stop it at the outset before it gathers steam. A dispute feeds on itself and grabs hold of those who are mired in it. It’s easier to keep aloof from a fight than to extricate oneself.

(3.9) Angry people should avoid weighty undertakings, or at least those that push them past the point of exhaustion; their minds should not be employed in difficulties but given over to enjoyable arts. Let the reading of poetry calm them and history amuse them with its stories; let them be diverted gently and sensitively. Pythagoras used the lyre to resolve troubles of the mind, and who does not know that, while bugles and trumpets are stimulants, certain songs have a soothing effect by which the mind is relaxed into sleep? Shades of green are a help to

confused eyes, and a weak eyesight finds comfort in certain colors while others blunt it with their brightness; similarly, joyful pursuits can calm ailing minds. We must flee the forum, the law offices, the courts, and everything that makes our vice fester.[43] We must also beware of physical exhaustion, for it wears away whatever is gentle and peaceful in us and arouses the harsh parts.… Hunger and thirst too must be avoided, for the same reasons; they grate on and inflame the mind. It's an old saying that quarrels are sought by the weary; just as much, too, by the hungry and the thirsty and by every man who yearns for anything. For just as wounds are pained by a light touch or even the apprehension of a touch, so the afflicted mind is offended by the slightest things, so much so that some people have filed suit over a greeting, a letter, a speech, or a question. Ailing things can't be touched without a fight being provoked.

(3.10) It is best therefore to restrain oneself at the first sign of the evil, then to give as little rein as possible to one's words and to block the onset.[44] It's easy to detect when one's emotions first arise, since the hallmarks of the ailments precede them. Just as the warning signs of a storm or a rainfall precede it, similarly there are advance signals of anger, love, and all those whirlwinds that disturb our minds. People who are subject to seizures[45] know that the malady is arriving, if the heat leaves their extremities, their vision dims, they feel a nervous trembling, their memory fails them, and their head whirls round. They hold it off at the beginning by employing the usual remedies; whatever it is that possesses their minds is beaten back by a stimulus to the taste or smell, or poultices are applied to fight against the chill and stiffness. Or, if medicine cannot do enough to help them, they seclude themselves and have their fit with no onlookers.

It is useful for each of us to recognize our own illness and to suppress its strength before it spreads. We should consider what irritates us most of all. For some it's affronts of speech; for others, of deeds. This one wants consideration for high rank; that one, for good looks. One longs to be thought highly refined; another, deeply learned. One can't abide arrogance; another, stubbornness. One thinks his slaves are not even worth getting mad at; another is fierce at home but gentle in public. One thinks it an injury to be asked for something; another, an insult not to be asked. People are not all wounded in the same spot. It behooves you to know what part of you is vulnerable so you can protect it most of all.

(3.11) It is not to your benefit to see and hear everything. Many injuries ought to pass over us; if you ignore them, you get no more injury

from them. You want to be less angry? Ask fewer questions. Those who investigate what was said against them, who flush out mean-spirited talk even if it was being kept secret, are themselves the source of their own turmoil. It's only interpretation that causes things to look like injuries—in fact, some of them ought to be put off until later; others, laughed off; still others, forgiven.

Anger should be fenced off by various means. Most things should be turned into sport and jest. They say that Socrates, struck by a blow to the head, said nothing more than "It's annoying how one doesn't know when to go out wearing a helmet." It doesn't matter how an injury was done, but how it was received.

I don't understand why self-control is so difficult, since I know that even tyrants, their temperaments puffed up by both wealth and power, have suppressed the harshness that comes naturally to them. Once, the story goes, a drunken man was talking freely at a banquet against the cruelty of Pisistratus, tyrant of Athens, and had no lack of helpers willing to lend their hands and add fuel to the fire in this place or that. Pisistratus bore it all with calm mind and replied to those needling him that they didn't anger him any more than if some blindfolded man had happened to bump against him.

(3.13) Struggle against yourself; if [you want] to conquer anger, you can't allow it to conquer you. You'll begin to conquer it if it stays hidden, if no exit is permitted to it. Let's obscure its signs and keep it shrouded and secret, as much as we can. This will be achieved only with great exertion, since anger longs to leap out, set the eyes blazing, and contort the face; but if it's allowed to project beyond us, it will have gotten above us. Let it stay buried in the deepest recess of the heart; let it be borne, not bear us with it. Rather, let's change all its manifestations to their opposite: relax the face, soften the voice, slow the step; bit by bit, inner feelings will conform to outer signs.

In Socrates' case, it was a mark of his anger if he lowered his voice and spoke more sparingly; it seemed as though he were blocking himself. His friends then used to grab him and admonish him, and this reproach for his hidden anger was not unwelcome to him. Shouldn't he have been pleased that, though many understood his rage, no one felt it? They *would* have felt it, if he had not given his friends the right to chastise him—just as he assumed that right over them. How much more necessary, for us, to do these things! We should ask each of our closest friends to take the most liberty in opposing us at the very moment when we are least tolerant of that liberty, and not to consent to our anger; rather, let's

summon help against this powerful yet, in our minds, pleasing evil, at times when we are thinking clearly, when we have ourselves in hand. Those who can't tolerate wine and fear the rashness and intemperance of their drunkenness bid their attendants to carry them out of the banquet hall; having seen how recklessly they act when "ill," they forbid people to follow their own commands when their health has a downturn.

It is best to look ahead for ways to block our known vices and, above all, to so compose our mind that even when battered by sudden and weighty affairs, it either doesn't feel anger, or if anger *does* get stirred up by the scale of the unexpected injury, the mind drags this feeling back into its depths and gives no vent to its pain. It will be clear to you that this is possible, if I adduce a few examples, out of a vast store, that teach us how much evil anger contains when wielded with the full force of the very powerful, and how much it can govern itself when suppressed by a fear that surpasses it.

(3.14) King Cambyses[46] was overly given to drinking wine, and Prexaspes, one of his inner circle, warned him to drink less, saying that drunkenness was shameful in a monarch, a man observed and heard by all. Cambyses replied, "Just so you'll know how I never lose control, I'll prove right now that my eyes and hands are quite capable, even after my wine." Then he drank more freely than at other times, from fuller goblets, and when he was sodden and wine-soaked, he ordered the son of Prexaspes, his chastiser, to go just outside the door and stand there with his left hand held above his head. Then he bent his bow and shot the boy right through the heart—it was where he had said he was aiming—and, having had his chest cut open, showed the barb stuck in the heart itself. He looked back at the boy's father and asked him whether or not he had a sure enough hand; Prexaspes said that Apollo himself could not have shot more true. May the gods blast him, a slave in his mind more than in his status! He praised a deed that was too much even to watch.… We'll examine elsewhere how the father ought to have behaved,[47] as he stood over his son's corpse and the murder he had both witnessed and caused. What's clear in the present context is that anger *can* be contained.

(3.15) I don't doubt that Harpagus[48] urged something similar on his own king, the ruler of the Persians, after that king, offended by him, put the flesh of his children before him to eat for dinner, and asked whether he liked the flavor. Then, when he saw Harpagus was sufficiently full of his crimes, he ordered the heads of the children to be brought in, and asked how he had enjoyed them. The wretched man did not lack for

words; his mouth did not stay closed. “When you’re with a king,” he said, “every meal is pleasant.” What did he gain by this flattery? That he wasn’t asked to eat the leftovers.

I don’t forbid a father to condemn the deed of his king; I don’t forbid him to seek a worthy revenge for so foul a monstrosity. For the moment, I take this lesson: that it’s possible for anger, even arising out of tremendous evils, to be hidden away, and forced to speak words that refute its presence. This reining in of anguish is necessary for those allotted this kind of life, those invited to a king’s table. That’s the way to eat among kings, the way to drink, the way to reply. One must smile at the deaths of one’s kin.[49]

(3.18.3) But why look to antiquity? Just recently[50] Caligula, in a single day, flogged, tortured, and killed Sextus Papinius, the son of an ex-consul; Betilienus Bassus, his own quaestor and the son of his own procurator; and other senators and Roman knights, not as part of an investigation but simply to gratify himself. And he was so unwilling to put off the pleasure his cruelty demanded, right away and in huge measure, that when he bumped into some of his targets walking with their wives and other senators in the colonnade of his mother’s gardens (the one dividing her porch from the river),[51] he had them beheaded by lamplight. What was the hurry? What danger would one night have posed to his person or the state? How little a thing it was to wait for daylight, so he might not kill senators of the Roman people in his slippers!

(3.19) It’s relevant to understand the arrogance of that man’s cruelty, though some may think we go off track here and stray into a detour. But this topic will be part of our discussion of anger that rages beyond the norm. He had already, before this, killed senators by flogging; he made it possible to say “these things happen.” He had applied all the most painful tortures nature offers, the “harp strings,” the ankle clamps, the rack, fire, his own face. And here you’ll say “How awful! If he tore apart three senators amid beatings and burnings, as though they were worthless slaves—that man who pondered the slaughter of the entire Senate, who wished that the Roman people had one single neck so that he could gather all his crimes, spread out over so many places and times, into one blow and one day!” . . . It would draw things out to add that he did away with the fathers of those he had killed, on the same night, after sending centurions to their homes—that is, the merciful man freed them from grief. But it’s not my plan to describe Caligula’s cruelty, only his

anger—a force that not only raged at individuals but ripped apart whole peoples and lashed out at cities, rivers, and things that could not feel any sense of pain.

(3.20) Similarly, the Persian king once cut off the noses of an entire nation in Syria, whence comes the name of the place, Rhinocolura.[52] Do you imagine he spared them in not cutting off their entire heads? He was delighted with his new form of punishment.

(3.22) So much for the examples of what to *avoid*; let's turn on the other hand to ones you should *follow*, the temperate and gentle kind, yet practiced by those who had every reason to get angry and the power to take revenge. Nothing would have been easier for King Antigonus[53] than to order the execution of two of his soldiers; while leaning against the king's tent, they were doing what people do with great delight, even though it's very dangerous, bad-mouthing their own king. Antigonus heard it all, as there was only a piece of cloth between the talkers and the listener. He moved that cloth gently aside and said, "Move further off, so the king won't hear you."[54]

*Seneca returns at the end of book 3 to the attitude-adjustment theme he had sounded in book 2, urging his readers to give up the self-importance that leads them to feel wronged by others, or, if they cannot do this, to find reasons to forgive those who have wronged them. Chief among these, again as seen in book 2, is the universal fallibility of our species, a condition that should lead us toward mercy and away from judgment —"a pact of mutual leniency" with our fellow humans.*

(3.24.2) What reason is there that I should punish, with shackles and floggings, my slave for speaking too loud or showing a bitter expression or not coming in response to my every whisper? Who am I, that it's a sin for my ears to be hurt? When many have pardoned their foes, shall I not pardon those who are tardy, or negligent, or chatty? . . . He's a friend: he didn't realize what he was doing. He's an enemy: he did what he had to. The overly clever man should gain our trust; the overly stupid, our pardon. On behalf of each one, we should tell ourselves this: "Even the wisest have failed at many things; no one is so careful that his diligence doesn't sometimes get away from him; no one is so mature that changes of circumstance do not push his gravity into some too-rash deed, no one is so shy of giving offense as not to accidentally commit the very offenses he avoids."

(3.26) But you reply, “I can’t let it pass; it’s hard to endure a wrong.” That’s a lie. For who is unable to bear a wrong, if they can bear feeling angry? Consider in addition that what you’re doing makes you endure both anger and injury. Why do you put up with the ravings of a sick man, the abuse of a lunatic, or the bold hands of young children? No doubt because they don’t seem to know what they’re doing. What does it matter what shortcoming makes each one reckless? Recklessness serves all men equally as a plea. “What then?” you ask. “Will he get off *scot-free*?” Pretend that’s what you want. Nevertheless, it won’t happen; the greatest punishment of a wrong that’s been committed is having committed it.[55] No one suffers a weightier consequence than those who are handed over to the torture of regret.

Then too, if we are to be fair judges of all mischances, we must look at the human condition generally.… All of us are imprudent and thoughtless, all are unstable, contentious, ambitious, and—why hide with gentler words a sore that’s clearly seen?—we’re all of us evil. So whatever each of us finds to reproach in another, he’ll find also in his own breast. Why call attention to one man’s paleness or another’s leanness? Plague is everywhere. Let’s be kinder to one another; we’re just wicked people living among wicked people. Only one thing can give us peace, and that’s a pact of mutual leniency. “He’s hurt me already, when I didn’t yet hurt him.” But perhaps you already injured *someone*, or will do. Don’t reckon up by the hour or the day, but look at the entire bearing of your mind. Even if you’ve done nothing bad, you *could*.

(3.28) You get mad first at this one, then that; at slaves, then at freedmen; at parents, then at children; at the famous, then at common folk. Everywhere you look there are plenty of grounds, unless your mind steps up for the defense. Your rage at this man drives you one way; at that man, another; your fury will go on and on, fed by newly arising grievances. So then, unhappy fellow, will you ever *love*? Oh, the good time you waste in an evil business! How much better to build friendships and lessen enmities, tend to the common good, shift your effort into your household affairs, rather than looking around to see what harm you can do to someone, what wound you can inflict on his reputation or his estate or his body—even though this must involve you in struggle and danger, even if it’s a lesser man you contend with!

(3.33) There’s a great hue and cry over money. Money exhausts the law courts, sets fathers and children at odds, mixes poisons, hands over swords to murderers just as much as to soldiers. Money is distilled from our blood. For its sake, the nights of husbands and wives are set howling

with quarrels, crowds bear down on the tribunals of magistrates, kings slaughter and plunder and destroy cities built by the long labor of time so they may hunt up gold and silver in their ashes. It's nice to look at bags of cash lying in a corner, but it's these that cause eyes to be gouged out in a fight, that make the courtrooms resound with the shouting of lawsuits, that recall judges from distant regions to sit and decide whose greed has a more just claim. What about the old man about to die without an heir, whose insides nonetheless get all torn up, not over a moneybag, but a handful of coppers, or a denarius[56] that a slave charged him for expenses? What about the ailing moneylender, so gnarled that he can no longer use his hands and feet for adding sums, who shouts and demands his pennies back even in the throes of his illness, all for the sake of an interest rate of one-tenth of one percent? If you offered me all the money dug out at great effort from all the metal mines, if you tossed right in front of me whatever is concealed in our treasuries (minus what's been wrongly extracted—the greed that took it can put it back under the ground), I wouldn't consider the whole heap to be worth a good man's frowning face.[57] How much laughter should attend the things that draw our tears!

(3.34) Look now! Let's examine other slights: food, and drink, and the elegance people work at for the sake of these; insulting words; gestures that don't convey enough honor; stubborn beasts of burden and tardy slaves; suspicions and dark interpretations of someone else's words, which make the gift of human speech into one of nature's many injuries—believe me, these things are not serious, though we get seriously heated over them. They're the sort of things that send young boys into fights and brawls. We pursue them so gravely, yet they hold nothing weighty or great. That's why I tell you that your anger is a kind of madness: because you set a huge price on worthless things.

(3.36) All our senses must be brought to a stable condition. They are by nature resilient, if the mind—which needs to be called to account every day—ceases to undermine them. Sextius[58] used to do this, when, at the day's end, as he prepared himself for nighttime rest, he would ask his own mind: "Which of your offenses have you cured today? Which fault have you blocked? In what area are you better?" Anger will abate and become more temperate if it knows that it must come before a judge every day. What could be finer than this method of shaking off all that the day has brought? What a sleep follows after this inspection of oneself; how peaceful, deep, and free of care—after the mind has been

either praised or scolded, and the observer and hidden justicer of the self has searched one's character! I make use of this resource; I plead a case every day in my own private court session. When the daylight has faded from view, and my wife, who knows well this custom of mine, keeps quiet,[59] I become an inspector and reexamine the course of my day, my deeds and words; I hide nothing from myself, I omit nothing. There's no reason my mistakes should give me cause to fear, as long as I can say: "See that you don't do that any more, but this time I forgive you. You spoke too combatively in that quarrel, so from now on don't spend time with the ignorant; if they haven't learned by now, they don't want to. You scolded that fellow with less restraint than you should have, and thus gave offense rather than helping him improve: next time consider not the truth of what you say but whether the one you say it to can endure hearing the truth; good folk are glad to be chastised, but the worst sort find their preceptor very grating. (3.37) At the dinner party, you felt wounded by some people's jokes and comments that were tossed off to hurt you: Remember to avoid boorish gatherings; those who feel no shame when sober feel an even freer license after drinking. You saw your friend get annoyed at the doorkeeper of some lawyer or rich man, because the slave had stood in his way when he tried to go in, then you got angry yourself on his behalf at that worthless chattel. Will you get angry then at a chained watchdog? Even the dog becomes tame if, when it's barking its head off, you throw it some food. Draw farther back, and laugh!

"That guy thinks he's a somebody, just because he stands guard over a crowd of litigants at his besieged doorway; meanwhile the fellow lounging inside is happy and lucky, and thinks his challenging entryway is the sign of an exalted and powerful man;[60] he doesn't realize that the door of a prison is the most forbidding door of all. You should assume that there are many things ahead you will have to suffer. Is anyone surprised at getting a chill in winter? Or getting seasick while on the sea? Or that they get bumped walking a city street? The mind is strong against things it has prepared for. You've been seated in a less honored place at table, so you start to get angry at your fellow guest, at your host, at the one who was seated in a more favored spot. Madman! What does it matter what part of the dining-couch you park yourself on? Can a cushion make you either nobler or baser? Someone spoke ill of your talent, so you gave him a dirty look; are these the rules you accept?"[61]

(3.38) So someone insulted you. Surely it wasn't a greater insult than Diogenes, the Stoic philosopher,[62] received when, as he was discoursing about anger, an arrogant young man spat on him. He put up with this in genial and wise humor. "I'm not angry," he said, "but I'm not sure whether I should be."

*In the magniloquent coda to his essay, Seneca turns to a theme that was never far from his thoughts (see* How to Die *in this volume's series), the imminence of death.*

(3.42) Let's get rid of anger's evil; let's purge the mind, tear out by the roots that which would grow back if any small pieces hang on anywhere. Let's not just restrain our anger but expunge it altogether—for what restraint can there be when we're dealing with evil? We will have the power to do it, provided we make the effort.

Nothing will aid us more than the contemplation of our mortality. Let's each say to each other and to ourselves: "What joy is there in proclaiming our grievances and wasting our brief lifespan, as though we were born to live forever? What joy in taking the days that could be devoted to honorable pleasures and devoting them instead to someone's pain and torture? Such days aren't disposable; we don't have spare time to squander. Why do we rush into a fight? Why bring quarrels on ourselves? Why take up huge hatreds, forgetful of our own weakness, and though breakable ourselves, be roused to break others? Soon a fever, or some other bodily ill, will put a stop to the enmities that we maintain with a resolute mind; soon death will intervene to halt the most bitter contest. Why do we get into an uproar and, like mutineers, throw our lives into disorder? Fate stands over our heads and counts up our waning days, coming nearer and nearer. That space of time you allot to cause another's death is perhaps about right for your own. (3.43) Why not rather hoard this brief space of life and make it peaceful for yourself and for others? Why not merit the love of all while you live and their fond regret after you're gone? Why do you want to tear down that man who treats you too snootily? Why do you try with all your might to destroy the one who snaps at you—a lowly fellow, much despised, yet vexing and annoying to his betters? Why do you get angry at a slave, a master, a king, a dependent? Hold back a bit; look, here's death, arriving to make you equal with them."

We often see, in the morning shows at the arena, the combat of a bull and bear tied together; after they've battered one other, an executioner

awaits each one. We do just the same. We lash out at someone tethered to us, when in fact the end—already far along—looms over both winner and loser. Let's instead squeeze out whatever tiny space of time is left, in quiet and calm. Let no man hate my corpse on its bier.

Often a cry of "fire" from nearby houses breaks up a quarrel, or the arrival of a wild animal drives off a burglar or bandit. There's no time to struggle with lesser troubles when a greater fear makes its appearance. What do we see in struggles and treachery? Surely there's nothing more than death you can wish on the person you're angry with—and he *will* die, even if you do nothing. You're wasting effort if you want to bring about that which is going to happen anyway.… But whether you contemplate the ultimate punishment, or something more lenient, how little time remains, either for him to be tortured by paying the penalty, or for you to take your wicked joy in imposing it.

Soon we'll spit out our life's breath. For the moment, while we still draw it, while we're in the human world, let's cherish our humanity. Let's not be a source of fear or danger to anyone. Let's cast scorn on injuries, harms, insults, and taunts; let's put up with brief annoyances. As they say, the moment we turn and look behind us, death stands right there.

# DE IRA

Exegisti a me, Novate, ut scriberem quemadmodum posset ira leniri, nec inmerito mihi videris hunc praecipue adfectum pertimuisse maxime ex omnibus taetrum ac rabidum. Ceteris enim aliquid quieti placidique inest, hic totus concitatus et in impetu est, doloris armorum sanguinis suppliciorum minime humana furens cupiditate, dum alteri noceat sui neglegens, in ipsa inruens tela et ultionis secum ultorem tracturae avidus.

Quidam itaque e sapientibus viris iram dixerunt brevem insaniam; aeque enim inpotens sui est, decoris oblita, necessitudinum immemor, in quod coepit pertinax et intenta, rationi consiliisque praeclusa, vanis agitata causis, ad dispectum aequi verique inhabilis, ruinis simillima quae super id quod oppressere franguntur. Ut scias autem non esse sanos quos ira possedit, ipsum illorum habitum intuere; nam ut furentium certa indicia sunt audax et minax vultus, tristis frons, torva facies, citatus gradus, inquietae manus, color versus, crebra et vehementius acta suspiria, ita irascentium eadem signa sunt: flagrant ac micant oculi, multus ore toto rubor exaestuante ab imis praecordiis sanguine, labra quatiuntur, dentes comprimuntur, horrent ac surriguntur capilli, spiritus coactus ac stridens, articulorum se ipsos torquentium sonus, gemitus mugitusque et parum explanatis vocibus sermo praeruptus et conplosae saepius manus et pulsata humus pedibus et totum concitum corpus magnasque irae minas agens, foeda visu et horrenda facies depravantium se atque intumescentium—nescias utrum magis detestabile vitium sit an deforme.

Cetera licet abscondere et in abdito alere: ira se profert et in faciem exit, quantoque maior, hoc effervescit manifestius. Non vides ut omnium animalium, simul ad nocendum insurrexerunt, praecurrant notae ac tota corpora solitum quietumque egrediantur habitum et feritatem suam exasperent? Spumant apris ora, dentes acuuntur adtritu, taurorum cornua iactantur in vacuum et harena pulsu pedum spargitur, leones fremunt, inflantur inritatis colla serpentibus, rabidarum canum tristis aspectus est: nullum est animal tam horrendum tam perniciosumque natura ut non appareat in illo, simul ira inuasit, novae feritatis accessio. Nec ignoro

ceteros quoque adfectus vix occultari, libidinem metumque et au daciam dare sui signa et posse praenosci; neque enim ulla vehementior intrat agitatio quae nihil moveat in vultu. Quid ergo interest? quod alii adfectus apparent, hic eminet.

(1.2) Iam vero si effectus eius damnaque intueri velis, nulla pestis humano generi pluris stetit. Videbis caedes ac venena et reorum mutuas sordes et urbium clades et totarum exitia gentium et principum sub civili hasta capita venalia et subiectas tectis faces nec intra moenia coercitos ignes sed ingentia spatia regionum hostili flamma relucentia. Aspice nobilissimarum civitatum fundamenta vix notabilia: has ira deiecit. Aspice solitudines per multa milia sine habitatore desertas: has ira exhausit. Aspice tot memoriae proditos duces mali exempla fati: alium ira in cubili suo confodit, alium intra sacra mensae iura percussit, alium intra leges celebrisque spectaculum fori lancinavit, alium filii parricidio dare sanguinem iussit, alium servili manu regalem aperire iugulum, alium in cruce membra diffindere. Et adhuc singulorum supplicia narro: quid si tibi libuerit, relictis in quos ira viritim exarsit, aspicere caesas gladio contiones et plebem inmisso milite contrucidatam et in perniciem promiscuam totos populos capitis damna<tos> * * *?

(1.7) Numquid, quamvis non sit naturalis ira, adsumenda est, quia utilis saepe fuit? Extollit animos et incitat, nec quicquam sine illa magnificum in bello fortitudo gerit, nisi hinc flamma subdita est et hic stimulus peragitavit misitque in pericula audaces. Optimum itaque quidam putant temperare iram, non tollere, eoque detracto quod exundat ad salutarem modum cogere, id vero retinere sine quo languebit actio et vis ac vigor animi resolvetur. Primum facilius est excludere perniciosa quam regere et non admittere quam admissa moderari; nam cum se in possessione posuerunt, potentiora rectore sunt nec recidi se minuive patiuntur. Deinde ratio ipsa, cui freni traduntur, tam diu potens est quam diu diducta est ab adfectibus; si miscuit se illis et inquinavit, non potest continere quos summovere potuisset. Commota enim semel et excussa mens ei servit quo inpellitur. Quarundam rerum initia in nostra potestate sunt, ulteriora nos vi sua rapiunt nec regressum relinquunt. Ut in praeceps datis corporibus nullum sui arbitrium est nec resistere morarive deiecta potuerunt, sed consilium omne et paenitentiam inrevocabilis praecipitatio abscidit et non licet eo non pervenire quo non ire licuisset, ita animus, si in iram amorem aliosque se proiecit adfectus, non

permittitur reprimere impetum; rapiat illum oportet et ad imum agat pondus suum et vitiorum natura proclivis.

(1.8) Optimum est primum inritamentum irae protinus spernere ipsisque repugnare seminibus et dare operam ne incidamus in iram. Nam si coepit ferre transversos, difficilis ad salutem recursus est, quoniam nihil rationis est ubi semel adfectus inductus est iusque illi aliquod voluntate nostra datum est: faciet de cetero quantum volet, non quantum permiseris. In primis, inquam, finibus hostis arcendus est; nam cum intravit et portis se intulit, modum a captivis non accipit. Neque enim sepositus est animus et extrinsecus speculatur adfectus, ut illos non patiatur ultra quam oportet procedere, sed in adfectum ipse mutatur ideoque non potest utilem illam vim et salutarem proditam iam infirmatamque revocare.

(1.12) ‘Quid ergo?’ inquit ‘vir bonus non irascitur, si caedi patrem suum viderit, si rapi matrem?’ Non irascetur, sed vindicabit, sed tuebitur. Quid autem times ne parum magnus illi stimulus etiam sine ira pietas sit? Aut dic eodem modo: ‘quid ergo? cum videat secari patrem suum filiumue, vir bonus non flebit nec linquetur animo?’ . . . Officia sua vir bonus exequetur inconfusus, intrepidus; et sic bono viro digna faciet ut nihil faciat viro indignum. Pater caedetur: defendam; caesus est: exequar, quia oportet, non quia dolet.… Irasci pro suis non est pii animi sed infirmi: illud pulchrum dignumque, pro parentibus liberis amicis civibus prodire defensorem ipso officio ducente, volentem iudicantem providentem, non inpulsum et rabidum. Nullus enim adfectus vindicandi cupidior est quam ira, et ob id ipsum ad vindicandum inhabilis: praerapida et amens, ut omnis fere cupiditas, ipsa sibi in id in quod properat opponitur.

(1.15) Nil minus quam irasci punientem decet, cum eo magis ad emendationem poena proficiat, si iudicio irrogata est. Inde est quod Socrates servo ait ‘caederem te, nisi irascerer’. Admonitionem servi in tempus sanius distulit, illo tempore se admonuit. Cuius erit tandem temperatus adfectus, cum Socrates non sit ausus se irae committere?

(1.20) Ne illud quidem iudicandum est, aliquid iram ad magnitudinem animi conferre. Non est enim illa magnitudo: tumor est; nec corporibus copia vitiosi umoris intentis morbus incrementum est sed pestilens abundantia. Omnes quos vecors animus supra cogitationes extollit humanas altum quiddam et sublime spirare se credunt; ceterum nil solidi subest, sed in ruinam prona sunt quae sine fundamentis crevere. Non

habet ira cui insistat; non ex firmo mansuroque oritur.… ‘Quid ergo? non aliquae voces ab iratis emittuntur quae magno emissae videantur animo?’ <Immo> veram ignorantibus magnitudinem, qualis illa dira et abominanda ‘oderint, dum metuant’.… Magno hoc dictum spiritu putas? Falleris; nec enim magnitudo ista est sed immanitas. Non est quod credas irascentium verbis, quorum strepitus magni, minaces sunt, intra mens pavidissima. Nec est quod existimes verum esse quod apud disertissimum virum <T.> Livium dicitur: ‘vir ingenii magni magis quam boni.’ Non potest istud separari: aut et bonum erit aut nec magnum, quia magnitudinem animi inconcussam intellego et introrsus solidam et ab imo parem firmamque, qualis inesse malis ingeniis non potest. Terribilia enim esse et tumultuosa et exitiosa possunt: magnitudinem quidem, cuius firmamentum roburque bonitas est, non habebunt. Ceterum sermone, conatu et omni extra paratu facient magnitudinis fidem; eloquentur aliquid quod tu magni <animi> putes, sicut C. Caesar, qui iratus caelo quod obstreperetur pantomimis, quos imitabatur studiosius quam spectabat, quodque comessatio sua fulminibus terreretur (prorsus parum certis), ad pugnam vocavit Iovem et quidem sine missione, Homericum illum exclamans versum:

ἦ μᾶ ἀνάειρ᾽, ἢ ἐγὼ σέ.

Quanta dementia fuit! Putavit aut sibi noceri ne ab Iove quidem posse aut se nocere etiam Iovi posse. Non puto parum momenti hanc eius vocem ad incitandas coniuratorum mentes addidisse; ultimae enim patientiae visum est eum ferre qui Iovem non ferret.

(1.21) Nihil ergo in ira, ne cum videtur quidem vehemens et deos hominesque despiciens, magnum, nihil nobile est. Aut si videtur alicui magnum animum ira producere, videatur et luxuria—ebore sustineri vult, purpura vestiri, auro tegi, terras transferre, maria concludere, flumina praecipitare, nemora suspendere; videatur et avaritia magni animi—acervis auri argentique incubat et provinciarum nominibus agros colit et sub singulis vilicis latiores habet fines quam quos consules sortiebantur; videatur et libido magni animi—transnat freta, puerorum greges castrat, sub gladium mariti venit morte contempta.… Omnia ista, non refert in quantum procedant extendantque se, angusta sunt, misera depressa; sola sublimis et excelsa virtus est, nec quicquam magnum est nisi quod simul placidum.

(2.18) Quoniam quae de ira quaeruntur tractavimus, accedamus ad remedia eius. Duo autem, ut opinor, sunt: ne incidamus in iram, et ne in ira peccemus. Ut in corporum cura alia de tuenda valetudine, alia de restituenda praecepta sunt, ita aliter iram debemus repellere, aliter compescere. Ut vitemus, quaedam ad universam vitam pertinentia praecipientur: ea in educationem et in sequentia tempora dividentur.

Educatio maximam diligentiam plurimumque profuturam desiderat; facile est enim teneros adhuc animos componere, difficulter reciduntur vitia quae nobiscum creverunt.

(2.21) Plurimum, inquam, proderit pueros statim salubriter institui; difficile autem regimen est, quia dare debemus operam ne aut iram in illis nutriamus aut indolem retundamus. Diligenti observatione res indiget; utrumque enim, et quod extollendum et quod deprimendum est, similibus alitur, facile autem etiam adtendentem similia decipiunt. Crescit licentia spiritus, servitute comminuitur; adsurgit si laudatur et in spem sui bonam adducitur, sed eadem ista insolentiam et iracundiam generant: itaque sic inter utrumque regendus est ut modo frenis utamur modo stimulis. Nihil humile, nihil servile patiatur; numquam illi necesse sit rogare suppliciter nec prosit rogasse, potius causae suae et prioribus factis et bonis in futurum promissis donetur.

In certaminibus aequalium nec vinci illum patiamur nec irasci; demus operam ut familiaris sit iis cum quibus contendere solet, ut in certamine adsuescat non nocere velle sed vincere; quotiens superaverit et dignum aliquid laude fecerit, attolli non gestire patiamur; gaudium enim exultatio, exultationem tumor et nimia aestimatio sui sequitur. Dabimus aliquod laxamentum, in desidiam vero otiumque non resolvemus et procul a contactu deliciarum retinebimus; nihil enim magis facit iracundos quam educatio mollis et blanda. Ideo unicis quo plus indulgetur, pupillisque quo plus licet, corruptior animus est. Non resistet offensis cui nihil umquam negatum est, cuius lacrimas sollicita semper mater abstersit, cui de paedagogo satisfactum est. Non vides ut maiorem quamque fortunam maior ira comitetur? In divitibus et nobilibus et magistratibus praecipue apparet, cum quidquid leve et inane in animo erat secunda se aura sustulit. Felicitas iracundiam nutrit, ubi aures superbas adsentatorum turba circumstetit: ‘tibi enim ille respondeat? Non pro fastigio te tuo metiris; ipse te proicis’ et alia quibus vix sanae et ab initio bene fundatae mentes restiterunt.

Longe itaque ab adsentatione pueritia removenda est: audiat verum. Et timeat interim, vereatur semper, maioribus adsurgat. Nihil per

iracundiam exoret: quod flenti negatum fuerit quieto offeratur. Et divitias parentium in conspectu habeat, non in usu. Exprobrentur illi perperam facta. Pertinebit ad rem praeceptores paedagogosque pueris placidos dari: proximis adplicatur omne quod tenerum est et in eorum similitudinem crescit; nutricum et paedagogorum rettulere mox adulescentium mores.

Apud Platonem educatus puer cum ad parentes relatusvociferantem videret patrem. ‘Numquam’ inquit ‘hoc apud Platonem vidi.’ Non dubito quin citius patrem imitatus sit quam Platonem.

Tenuis ante omnia victus <sit> et non pretiosa vestis et similis cultus cum aequalibus: non irascetur aliquem sibi comparari quem ab initio multis parem feceris.

(2.22) Sed haec ad liberos nostros pertinent; in nobis quidem sors nascendi et educatio nec vitii locum nec iam praecepti habet: sequentia ordinanda sunt.

Contra primas itaque causas pugnare debemus; causa autem iracundiae opinio iniuriae est, cui non facile credendum est. Ne apertis quidem manifestisque statim accedendum; quaedam enim falsa veri speciem ferunt. Dandum semper est tempus: veritatem dies aperit. Ne sint aures criminantibus faciles; hoc humanae naturae vitium suspectum notumque nobis sit, quod quae inviti audimus libenter credimus et antequam iudicemus irascimur. Quid quod non criminationibus tantum sed suspicionibus inpellimur et ex vultu risuque alieno peiora interpretati innocentibus irascimur?

Itaque agenda est contra se causa absentis et in suspenso ira retinenda; potest enim poena dilata exigi, non potest exacta revocari.

(2.24) Plurimum mali credulitas facit. Saepe ne audiendum quidem est, quoniam in quibusdam rebus satius est decipi quam diffidere. Tollenda ex animo suspicio et coniectura, fallacissima inritamenta: ‘ille me parum humane salutavit; ille osculo meo non adhaesit; ille inchoatum sermonem cito abrupit; ille ad cenam non vocavit; illius vultus aversior visus est.’ Non deerit suspicioni argumentatio: simplicitate opus est et benigna rerum aestimatione. Nihil nisi quod in oculos incurret manifestumque erit credamus, et quotiens suspicio nostra vana apparuerit, obiurgemus credulitatem; haec enim castigatio consuetudinem efficiet non facile credendi.

(2.25) Inde et illud sequitur, ut minimis sordidissimisque rebus non exacerbemur. Parum agilis est puer aut tepidior aqua poturo aut turbatus torus aut mensa neglegentius posita: ad ista concitari insania est. Aeger et infelicis valetudinis est quem levis aura contraxit, adfecti oculi quos candida vestis obturbat, dissolutus deliciis cuius latus alieno labore condoluit. Mindyriden aiunt fuisse ex Sybaritarum civitate qui, cum vidisset fodientem et altius rastrum adlevantem, lassum se fieri questus vetuit illum opus in conspectu suo facere; idem habere se peius questus est, quod foliis rosae duplicatis incubuisset. Ubi animum simul et corpus voluptates corrupere, nihil tolerabile videtur, non quia dura sed quia mollis patitur. Quid est enim cur tussis alicuius aut sternutamentum aut musca parum curiose fugata in rabiem agat aut obversatus canis aut clavis neglegentis servi manibus elapsa? Feret iste aequo animo civile convicium et ingesta in contione curiave maledicta cuius aures tracti subsellii stridor offendit? Perpetietur hic famem et aestivae expeditionis sitim qui puero male diluenti nivem irascitur? Nulla itaque res magis iracundiam alit quam luxuria intemperans et inpatiens: dure tractandus animus est ut ictum non sentiat nisi gravem.

(2.26) Irascimur aut iis a quibus ne accipere quidem potuimus iniuriam, aut iis a quibus accipere iniuriam potuimus. Ex prioribus quaedam sine sensu sunt, ut liber quem minutioribus litteris scriptum saepe proiecimus et mendosum laceravimus, ut vestimenta quae, quia displicebant, scidimus: his irasci quam stultum est, quae iram nostram nec meruerunt nec sentiunt! ‘Sed offendunt nos videlicet qui illa fecerunt.’ Primum saepe antequam hoc apud nos distinguamus irascimur. Deinde fortasse ipsi quoque artifices excusationes iustas adferent: alius non potuit melius facere quam fecit, nec ad tuam contumeliam parum didicit; alius non in hoc ut te offenderet fecit. Ad ultimum quid est dementius quam bilem in homines collectam in res effundere? Atqui ut his irasci dementis est quae anima carent, sic mutis animalibus, quae nullam iniuriam nobis faciunt, quia velle non possunt; non est enim iniuria nisi a consilio profecta.

(2.28) Si volumus aequi rerum omnium iudices esse, hoc primum nobis persuadeamus, neminem nostrum esse sine culpa; hinc enim maxima indignatio oritur: ‘nihil peccavi’ et ‘nihil feci’. Immo nihil fateris. Indignamur aliqua admonitione aut coercitione nos castigatos, cum illo ipso tempore peccemus, quod adicimus malefactis adrogantiam et contumaciam. Quis est iste qui se profitetur omnibus legibus innocentem? Ut hoc ita sit, quam angusta innocentia est ad legem bonum

esse! Quanto latius officiorum patet quam iuris regula! Quam multa pietas humanitas liberalitas iustitia fides exigunt, quae omnia extra publicas tabulas sunt!

Sed ne ad illam quidem artissimam innocentiae formulam praestare nos possumus: alia fecimus, alia cogitavimus, alia optavimus, aliis favimus; in quibusdam innocentes sumus, quia non successit. Hoc cogitantes aequiores simus delinquentibus, credamus obiurgantibus; utique bonis ne irascamur (cui enim non, si bonis quoque).… Dicetur aliquis male de te locutus: cogita an prior feceris, cogita de quam multis loquaris. Cogitemus, inquam, alios non facere iniuriam sed reponere, alios pro nobis facere, alios coactos facere, alios ignorantes, etiam eos qui volentes scientesque faciunt ex iniuria nostra non ipsam iniuriam petere: aut dulcedine urbanitatis prolapsus est, aut fecit aliquid, non ut nobis obesset, sed quia consequi ipse non poterat, nisi nos reppulisset; saepe adulatio dum blanditur offendit.

Quisquis ad se rettulerit quotiens ipse in suspicionem falsam inciderit, quam multis officiis suis fortuna speciem iniuriae induerit, quam multos post odium amare coeperit, poterit non statim irasci, utique si sibi tacitus ad singula quibus offenditur dixerit ‘hoc et ipse commisi’.

Sed ubi tam aequum iudicem invenies? Is qui nullius non uxorem concupiscit et satis iustas causas putat amandi quod aliena est, idem uxorem suam aspici non vult; et fidei acerrimus exactor est perfidus, et mendacia persequitur ipse periurus, et litem sibi inferri aegerrime calumniator patitur; pudicitiam servulorum adtemptari non vult qui non pepercit suae. Aliena vitia in oculis habemus, a tergo nostra sunt: inde est quod tempestiva filii convivia pater deterior filio castigat, et nihil alienae luxuriae ignoscit qui nihil suae negavit, et homicidae tyrannus irascitur, et punit furta sacrilegus. Magna pars hominum est quae non peccatis irascitur sed peccantibus. Faciet nos moderatiores respectus nostri, si consuluerimus nos: ‘numquid et ipsi aliquid tale commisimus? Numquid sic erravimus? Expeditne nobis ista damnare?’

(2.29) Maximum remedium irae mora est. Hoc ab illa pete initio, non ut ignoscat sed ut iudicet: graves habet impetus primos; desinet, si expectat. Nec universam illam temptaveris tollere: tota vincetur, dum partibus carpitur.

Ex iis quae nos offendunt alia renuntiantur nobis, alia ipsi audimus aut videmus. De iis quae narrata sunt non debemus cito credere: multi mentiuntur ut decipiant, multi quia decepti sunt.… De parvula summa iudicaturo tibi res sine teste non probaretur, testis sine iureiurando non

valeret, utrique parti dares actionem, dares tempus, non semel audires; magis enim veritas elucet quo saepius ad manum venit: amicum condemnas de praesentibus? Antequam audias, antequam interroges, antequam illi aut accusatorem suum nosse liceat aut crimen, irasceris? Iam enim, iam utrimque <quid> diceretur audisti?

(2.30) Quorundam ipsi testes sumus: in his naturam excutiemus voluntatemque facientium. Puer est: aetati donetur, nescit an peccet. Pater est: aut tantum profuit ut illi etiam iniuriae ius sit, aut fortasse ipsum hoc meritum eius est quo offendimur. Mulier est: errat. Iussus est: necessitati quis nisi iniquus suscenset? Laesus est: non est iniuria pati quod prior feceris. Iudex est: plus credas illius sententiae quam tuae. Rex est: si nocentem punit, cede iustitiae, si innocentem, cede fortunae. Mutum animal est aut simile muto: imitaris illud, si irasceris. Morbus est aut calamitas: levius transiliet sustinentem. Deus est: tam perdis operam cum illi irasceris quam cum illum alteri precaris iratum. Bonus vir est qui iniuriam fecit: noli credere. Malus: noli mirari; dabit poenas alteri quas debet tibi, et iam sibi dedit qui peccavit.

(2.31) Duo sunt, ut dixi, quae iracundiam concitant: primum, si iniuriam videmur accepisse—de hoc satis dictum est; deinde, si inique accepisse—de hoc dicendum est. Iniqua quaedam iudicant homines quia pati non debuerint, quaedam quia non speraverint. Indigna putamus quae inopinata sunt; itaque maxime commovent quae contra spem expectationemque evenerunt, nec aliud est quare in domesticis minima offendant, in amicis iniuriam vocemus neglegentiam. ‘Quomodo ergo’ inquit ‘inimicorum nos iniuriae movent?’ Quia non expectavimus illas aut certe non tantas. Hoc efficit amor nostri nimius: inviolatos nos etiam inimicis iudicamus esse debere; regis quisque intra se animum habet, ut licentiam sibi dari velit, in se nolit. Aut ignorantia itaque nos aut insolentia iracundos facit [ignorantia rerum]. Quid enim mirum est malos mala facinora edere? Quid novi est, si inimicus nocet, amicus offendit, filius labitur, servus peccat? Turpissimam aiebat Fabius imperatori excusationem esse ‘non putavi’, ego turpissimam homini puto. Omnia puta, expecta: etiam in bonis moribus aliquid existet asperius. Fert humana natura insidiosos animos, fert ingratos, fert cupidos, fert impios. Cum de unius moribus iudicabis, de publicis cogita. Ubi maxime gaudebis, maxime metues; ubi tranquilla tibi omnia videntur, ibi nocitura non desunt sed quiescunt. Semper futurum aliquid quod te offendat

existima: gubernator numquam ita totos sinus securus explicuit ut non expedite ad contrahendum armamenta disponeret.

Illud ante omnia cogita, foedam esse et execrabilem vim nocendi et alienissimam homini, cuius beneficio etiam saeva mansuescunt. Aspice elephantorum iugo colla summissa et taurorum pueris pariter ac feminis persultantibus terga inpune calcata et repentis inter pocula sinusque innoxio lapsu dracones et intra domum ursorum leonumque ora placida tractantibus adulantisque dominum feras: pudebit cum animalibus permutasse mores.

Nefas est nocere patriae; ergo civi quoque, nam hic pars patriae est—sanctae partes sunt, si universum venerabile est; ergo et homini, nam hic in maiore tibi urbe civis est. Quid si nocere velint manus pedibus, manibus oculi? Ut omnia inter se membra consentiunt quia singula servari totius interest, ita homines singulis parcent quia ad coetum geniti sunt, salva autem esse so cietas nisi custodia et amore partium non potest. Ne viperas quidem et natrices et si qua morsu aut ictu nocent effligeremus, si in reliquum mansuefacere possemus aut efficere ne nobis aliisue periculo essent; ergo ne homini quidem nocebimus quia peccavit, sed ne peccet, nec umquam ad praeteritum sed ad futurum poena referetur; non enim irascitur sed cavet. Nam si puniendus est cuicumque pravum maleficumque ingenium est, poena neminem excipiet.

(2.32) ‘At enim ira habet aliquam voluptatem et dulce est dolorem reddere.’ Minime; non enim ut in beneficiis honestum est merita meritis repensare, ita iniurias iniuriis. Illic vinci turpe est, hic vincere. Inhumanum verbum est et quidem pro iusto receptum ultio.… M. Catonem ignorans in balneo quidam percussit inprudens; quis enim illi sciens faceret iniuriam? Postea satis facienti Cato,’non memini’ inquit ‘me percussum.’ Melius putavit non agnoscere quam vindicare. ‘Nihil’ inquis ‘illi post tantam petulantiam mali factum est?’ Immo multum boni: coepit Catonem nosse. Magni animi est iniurias despicere; ultionis contumeliosissimum genus est non esse visum dignum ex quo peteretur ultio. Multi leves iniurias altius sibi demisere dum vindicant: ille magnus et nobilis qui more magnae ferae latratus minutorum canum securus exaudit.

(2.33) ‘Minus’ inquit ‘contemnemur, si vindicaverimus iniuriam.’ Si tamquam ad remedium venimus, sine ira veniamus, non quasi dulce sit vindicari, sed quasi utile; saepe autem satius fuit dissimulare quam ulcisci. Potentiorum iniuriae hilari vultu, non patienter tantum ferendae

sunt: facient iterum, si se fecisse crediderint. Hoc habent pessimum animi magna fortuna insolentes: quos laeserunt et oderunt. Notissima vox est eius qui in cultu regum consenuerat: cum illum quidam interrogaret quomodo rarissimam rem in aula consecutus esset, senectutem, ‘iniurias’ inquit ‘accipiendo et gratias agendo’.

Saepe adeo iniuriam vindicare non expedit ut ne fateri quidem expediat. C. Caesar Pastoris splendidi equitis Romani filium cum in custodia habuisset munditiis eius et cultioribus capillis offensus, rogante patre ut salutem sibi filii concederet, quasi de supplicio admonitus duci protinus iussit; ne tamen omnia inhumane faceret adversum patrem, ad cenam illum eo die invitavit. Venit Pastor vultu nihil exprobrante. Propinavit illi Caesar heminam et posuit illi custodem: perduravit miser, non aliter quam si fili sanguinem biberet. Unguentem et coronas misit et observare iussit an sumeret: sumpsit. Eo die quo filium extulerat, immo quo non extulerat, iacebat conviva centesimus et potiones vix honestas natalibus liberorum podagricus senex hauriebat, cum interim non lacrimam emisit, non dolorem aliquo signo erumpere passus est; cenavit tamquam pro filio exorasset. Quaeris quare? habebat alterum.… Contempsissem Romanum patrem, si sibi timuisset: nunc iram compescuit pietas. Dignus fuit cui permitteretur a convivio ad ossa fili legenda discedere; ne hoc quidem permisit benignus interim et comis adulescens: propinationibus senem crebris, ut cura leniretur admonens, lacessebat. Contra ille se laetum et oblitum quid eo actum esset die praestitit; perierat alter filius, si carnifici conviva non placuisset.

(2.34) Ergo ira abstinendum est, sive par est qui lacessendus est sive superior sive inferior. Cum pare contendere anceps est, cum superiore furiosum, cum inferiore sordidum. Pusilli hominis et miseri est repetere mordentem: mures formicaeque, si manum admoveris, ora convertunt; inbecillia se laedi putant, si tanguntur. Faciet nos mitiores, si cogitaverimus quid aliquando nobis profuerit ille cui irascimur, et meritis offensa redimetur. Illud quoque occurrat, quantum nobis commendationis allatura sit clementiae fama, quam multos venia amicos utiles fecerit. Ne irascamur inimicorum et hostium liberis: inter Sullanae crudelitatis exempla est quod ab re publica liberos proscriptorum summovit; nihil est iniquius quam aliquem heredem paterni odii fieri.

Cogitemus, quotiens ad ignoscendum dif ficiles erimus, an expediat nobis omnes inexorabiles esse. Quam saepe veniam qui negavit petit! Quam saepe eius pedibus advolutus est quem a suis reppulit! Quid est gloriosius quam iram amicitia mutare?

Quos populus Romanus fideliores habet socios quam quos habuit pertinacissimos hostes? Quod hodie esset imperium, nisi salubris providentia victos permiscuisset victoribus? Irascetur aliquis: tu contra beneficiis provoca; cadit statim simultas ab altera parte deserta; nisi paria non pugnant. Sed utrimque certabit ira, concurritur: ille est melior qui prior pedem rettulit, victus est qui vicit. Percussit te: recede; referiendo enim et occasionem saepius feriendi dabis et excusationem; non poteris revelli, cum voles.

(2.35) Numquid velit quisquam tam graviter hostem ferire ut relinquat manum in vulnere et se ab ictu revocare non possit? Atqui tale ira telum est: vix retrahitur. Arma nobis expedita prospicimus, gladium commodum et habilem: non vitabimus impetus animi graves et onerosos et inrevocabiles? Ea demum velocitas placet quae ubi iussa est vestigium sistit nec ultra destinata procurrit flectique et cursu ad gradum reduci potest; aegros scimus nervos esse, ubi invitis nobis moventur; senex aut infirmi corporis est qui cum ambulare vult currit: animi motus eos putemus sanissimos validissimosque qui nostro arbitrio ibunt, non suo ferentur.

Nihil tamen aeque profuerit quam primum intueri deformitatem rei, deinde periculum. Non est ullius adfectus facies turbatior: pulcherrima ora foedavit, torvos vultus ex tranquillissimis reddit; linquit decor omnis iratos, et sive amictus illis compositus est ad legem, trahent vestem omnemque curam sui effundent, sive capillorum natura vel arte iacentium non informis habitus, cum animo inhorrescunt; tumescunt venae; concutietur crebro spiritu pectus, rabida vocis eruptio colla distendet; tum artus trepidi, inquietae manus, totius corporis fluctuatio. Qualem intus putas esse animum cuius extra imago tam foeda est? . . . Quales sunt hostium vel ferarum caede madentium aut ad caedem euntium aspectus, qualia poetae inferna monstra finxerunt succincta serpentibus et igneo flatu, quales ad bella excitanda discordiamque in populos dividendam pacemque lacerandam deae taeterrimae inferum exeunt, talem nobis iram figuremus, flamma lumina ardentia, sibilo mugituque et gemitu et stridore et si qua his invisior vox est perstrepentem, tela manu utraque quatientem (neque enim illi se tegere curae est), torvam cruentamque et cicatricosam et verberibus suis lividam, incessus vesani, offusam multa caligine, incursitantem vastantem fugantemque et omnium odio laborantem, sui maxime, si aliter nocere non possit, terras maria caelum ruere cupientem, infestam pariter invisamque. Vel, si videtur, sit qualis apud vates nostros est

‘sanguineum quatiens dextra Bellona flagellum’ aut ‘scissa gaudens vadit Discordia palla’ aut si qua magis dira facies excogitari diri adfectus potest.

(2.36) Quibusdam, ut ait Sextius, iratis profuit aspexisse speculum. Perturbavit illos tanta mutatio sui; velut in rem praesentem adducti non agnoverunt se: et quantulum ex vera deformitate imago illa speculo repercussa reddebat! Animus si ostendi et si in ulla materia perlucere posset, intuentis confunderet ater maculosusque et aestuans et distortus et tumidus. Nunc quoque tanta deformitas eius est per ossa carnesque et tot inpedimenta effluentis: quid si nudus ostenderetur? Speculo quidem neminem deterritum ab ira credideris. Quid ergo? qui ad speculum venerat ut se mutaret, iam mutaverat.

Magis illud videndum est, quam multis ira per se nocuerit. Alii nimio fervore rupere venas et sanguinem supra vires elatus clamor egessit et luminum suffudit aciem in oculos vehementius umor egestus et in morbos aegri reccidere. Nulla celerior ad insaniam via est. Multi itaque continuaverunt irae furorem nec quam expulerant mentem umquam receperunt: Aiacem in mortem egit furor, in furorem ira. Mortem liberis, egestatem sibi, ruinam domui inprecantur, et irasci se negant non minus quam insanire furiosi. Amicissimis hostes vitandique carissimis, legum nisi qua nocent immemores, ad minima mobiles, non sermone, non officio adiri faciles, per vim omnia gerunt, gladiis et pugnare parati et incumbere.

Maximum enim illos malum cepit et omnia exsuperans vitia. Alia paulatim intrant, repentina et universa vis huius est. Omnis denique alios adfectus sibi subicit: amorem ardentissimum vincit, transfoderunt itaque amata corpora et in eorum quos occiderant iacuere complexibus; avaritiam, durissimum malum minimeque flexibile, ira calcavit, adactam opes suas spargere et domui rebusque in unum conlatis inicere ignem. Quid? non ambitiosus magno aestimata proiecit insignia honoremque delatum reppulit? Nullus adfectus est in quem non ira dominetur.

(3.1) Quod maxime desiderasti, Novate, nunc facere temptabimus, iram excidere animis aut certe refrenare et impetus eius inhibere. Id aliquando palam aperteque faciendum est, ubi minor vis mali patitur, aliquando ex occulto, ubi nimium ardet omnique inpedimento exasperatur et crescit; refert quantas vires quamque integras habeat, utrum reverberanda et agenda retro sit an cedere ei debeamus dum tempestas prima desaevit, ne remedia ipsa secum ferat. Consilium pro moribus cuiusque capiendum

erit; quosdam enim preces vincunt, quidam insultant instantque summissis, quosdam terrendo placabimus; alios obiurgatio, alios confessio, alios pudor coepto deiecit, alios mora, lentum praecipitis mali remedium, ad quod novissime descendendum est. Ceteri enim adfectus dilationem recipiunt et curari tardius possunt, huius incitata et se ipsa rapiens violentia non paulatim procedit sed dum incipit tota est; nec aliorum more vitiorum sollicitat animos, sed abducit et inpotentes sui cupidosque vel communis mali exagitat, nec in ea tantum in quae destinavit sed in occurrentia obiter furit. Cetera vitia inpellunt animos, ira praecipitat. Etiam si resistere contra adfectus suos non licet, at certe adfectibus ipsis licet stare: haec, non secus quam fulmina procellaeque et si qua alia inrevocabilia sunt quia non eunt sed cadunt, vim suam magis ac magis tendit. Alia vitia a ratione, hoc a sanitate desciscit; alia accessus lenes habent et incrementa fallentia: in iram deiectus animorum est.

(3.2) Nullam transit aetatem, nullum hominum genus excipit. Quaedam gentes beneficio egestatis non novere luxuriam; quaedam, quia exercitae et vagae sunt, effugere pigritiam; quibus incultus mos agrestisque vita est, circumscriptio ignota est et fraus et quodcumque in foro malum nascitur: nulla gens est quam non ira instiget, tam inter Graios quam inter barbaros potens, non minus perniciosa leges metuentibus quam quibus iura distinguit modus virium.

Denique cetera singulos corripiunt, hic unus adfectus est qui interdum publice concipitur. Numquam populus universus feminae amore flagravit nec in pecuniam aut lucrum tota civitas spem suam misit; ambitio viritim singulos occupat, inpotentia non est malum publicum; saepe in iram uno agmine itum est. Viri feminae, senes pueri, principes vulgusque consensere, et tota multitudo paucissimis verbis concitata ipsum concitatorem antecessit; ad arma protinus ignesque discursum est et indicta finitimis bella aut gesta cum civibus; totae cum stirpe omni crematae domus, et modo eloquio favorabili habitus in multo honore iram suae contionis excepit; in imperatorem suum legiones pila torserunt; dissedit plebs tota cum patribus; publicum consilium senatus non expectatis dilectibus nec nominato imperatore subitos irae suae duces legit ac per tecta urbis nobiles consectatus viros supplicium manu sumpsit; violatae legationes rupto iure gentium rabiesque infanda civitatem tulit, nec datum tempus quo resideret tumor publicus, sed deductae protinus classes et oneratae tumultuario milite; sine more, sine auspiciis populus ductu irae suae egressus fortuita raptaque pro armis gessit, deinde magna clade temeritatem audacis irae luit.

(3.4.4) Nonne revocare se quisque ab ira volet, cum intellexerit illam a suo primum malo incipere? Non vis ergo admoneam eos qui iram <in> summa potentia exercent et argumentum virium existimant et in magnis magnae fortunae bonis ponunt paratam ultionem, quam non sit potens, immo ne liber quidem dici possit irae suae captivus? Non vis admoneam, quo diligentior quisque sit et ipse se circumspiciat, alia animi mala ad pessimos quosque pertinere, iracundiam etiam eruditis hominibus et in alia sanis inrepere? adeo ut quidam simplicitatis indicium iracundiam dicant et vulgo credatur facillimus quisque huic obnoxius.

(3.5) ‘Quorsus’ inquis ‘hoc pertinet?’ Ut nemo se iudicet tutum ab illa, cum lenes quoque natura et placidos in saevitiam ac violentiam evocet. Quemadmodum adversus pestilentiam nihil prodest firmitas corporis et diligens valetudinis cura (promiscue enim inbecilla robustaque invadit), ita ab ira tam inquietis moribus periculum est quam compositis et remissis, quibus eo turpior ac periculosior est quo plus in illis mutat. Sed cum primum sit non irasci, secundum desinere, tertium alienae quoque irae mederi, dicam primum quemadmodum in iram non incidamus, deinde quemadmodum nos ab illa liberemus, novissime quemadmodum irascentem retineamus placemusque et ad sanitatem reducamus.

Ne irascamur praestabimus, si omnia vitia irae nobis subinde proposuerimus et illam bene aestimaverimus. Accusanda est apud nos, damnanda; perscrutanda eius mala et in medium protrahenda sunt; ut qualis sit appareat, comparanda cum pessimis est. Avaritia adquirit et contrahit, quo aliquis melior utatur: ira inpendit, paucis gratuita est. Iracundus dominus quot in fugam servos egit, quot in mortem! Quanto plus irascendo quam id erat propter quod irascebatur amisit! Ira patri luctum, marito divortium attulit, magistratui odium, candidato repulsam. Peior est quam luxuria, quoniam illa sua voluptate fruitur, haec alieno dolore. Vincit malignitatem et invidiam; illae enim infelicem fieri volunt, haec facere; illae fortuitis malis delectantur, haec non potest expectare fortunam: nocere ei quem odit, non noceri vult. Nihil est simultatibus gravius: has ira conciliat. Nihil est bello funestius: in hoc potentium ira prorumpit; ceterum etiam illa plebeia ira et privata inerme et sine viribus bellum est. Praeterea ira, ut seponamus quae mox secutura sunt, damna insidias perpetuam ex certaminibus mutuis sollicitudinem, dat poenas dum exigit; naturam hominis eiurat: illa in amorem hortatur, haec in odium; illa prodesse iubet, haec nocere.

(3.6) Nullum est argumentum magnitudinis certius quam nihil posse quo instigeris accidere. Pars superior mundi et ordinatior ac propinqua sideribus nec in nubem cogitur nec in tempestatem inpellitur nec versatur in turbinem; omni tumultu caret: inferiora fulminantur. Eodem modo sublimis animus, quietus semper et in statione tranquilla conlocatus, omnia infra se premens quibus ira contrahitur, modestus et venerabilis est et dispositus; quorum nihil invenies in irato. Quis enim traditus dolori et furens non primam reiecit verecundiam? Quis impetu turbidus et in aliquem ruens non quidquid in se venerandi habuit abiecit? Cui officiorum numerus aut ordo constitit incitato? Quis linguae temperavit? Quis ullam partem corporis tenuit? Quis se regere potuit inmissum?

Proderit nobis illud Democriti salutare praeceptum, quo monstratur tranquillitas si neque privatim neque publice multa aut maiora viribus nostris egerimus. Numquam tam feliciter in multa discurrenti negotia dies transit ut non aut ex homine aut ex re offensa nascatur quae animum in iras paret. Quemadmodum per frequentia urbis loca properanti in multos incursitandum est et aliubi labi necesse est, aliubi retineri, aliubi respergi, ita in hoc vitae actu dissipato et vago multa inpedimenta, multae querellae incidunt: alius spem nostram fefellit, alius distulit, alius intercepit; non ex destinato proposita fluxerunt. Nulli fortuna tam dedita est ut multa temptanti ubique respondeat; sequitur ergo ut is cui contra quam proposuerat aliqua cesserunt inpatiens hominum rerumque sit, ex levissimis causis irascatur nunc personae, nunc negotio, nunc loco, nunc fortunae, nunc sibi. Itaque ut quietus possit esse animus, non est iactandus nec multarum, ut dixi, rerum actu fatigandus nec magnarum supraque vires adpetitarum. Facile est levia aptare cervicibus et in hanc aut illam partem transferre sine lapsu, at quae alienis in nos manibus inposita aegre sustinemus, victi in proximo effundimus; etiam dum stamus sub sarcina, inpares oneri vacillamus.

(3.7.2) Quotiens aliquid conaberis, te simul et ea quae paras quibusque pararis ipse metire; faciet enim te asperum paenitentia operis infecti. Hoc interest utrum quis fervidi sit ingenii an frigidi atque humilis: generoso repulsa iram exprimet, languido inertique tristitiam. Ergo actiones nostrae nec parvae sint nec audaces et inprobae, in vicinum spes exeat, nihil conemur quod mox adepti quoque successisse miremur.

(3.8) Demus operam ne accipiamus iniuriam, quia ferre nescimus. Cum placidissimo et facillimo et minime anxio morosoque vivendum est; sumuntur a conversantibus mores et ut quaedam in contactos corporis

vitia transiliunt, ita animus mala sua proximis tradit: ebriosus convictores in amorem meri traxit, inpudicorum coetus fortem quoque et silice natum virum emolliit, avaritia in proximos virus suum transtulit. Eadem ex diverso ratio virtutum est, ut omne quod secum habent mitigent; nec tam valetudini profuit utilis regio et salubrius caelum quam animis parum firmis in turba meliore versari. Quae res quantum possit intelleges, si videris feras quoque convictu nostro mansuescere nullique etiam immani bestiae vim suam permanere, si hominis contubernium diu passa est: retunditur omnis asperitas paulatimque inter placida dediscitur.

Accedit huc quod non tantum exemplo melior fit qui cum quietis hominibus vivit, sed quod causas irascendi non invenit nec vitium suum exercet. Fugere itaque debebit omnis quos inritaturos iracundiam sciet. ‘Qui sunt’ inquis ‘isti?’ Multi ex variis causis idem facturi: offendet te superbus contemptu, dicax contumelia, petulans iniuria, lividus malignitate, pugnax contentione, ventosus et mendax vanitate; non feres a suspicioso timeri, a pertinace vinci, a delicato fastidiri. Elige simplices faciles moderatos, qui iram tuam nec evocent et ferant; magis adhuc proderunt summissi et humani et dulces, non tamen usque in adulationem, nam iracundos nimia adsentatio offendit: erat certe amicus noster vir bonus sed irae paratioris, cui non magis tutum erat blandiri quam male dicere. Caelium oratorem fuisse iracundissimum constat. Cum quo, ut aiunt, cenabat in cubiculo lectae patientiae cliens, sed difficile erat illi in copulam coniecto rixam eius cui cohaerebat effugere; optimum iudicavit quidquid dixisset sequi et secundas agere. Non tulit Caelius adsentientem et exclamavit, ‘dic aliquid contra, ut duo simus!’ Sed ille quoque, quod non irasceretur iratus, cito sine adversario desit.

Eligamus ergo vel hos potius, si conscii nobis iracundiae sumus, qui vultum nostrum ac sermonem sequantur: facient quidem nos delicatos et in malam consuetudinem inducent nihil contra voluntatem audiendi, sed proderit vitio suo intervallum et quietem dare. Difficiles quoque et indomiti natura blandientem ferent: nihil asperum tetricumque palpanti est.

Quotiens disputatio longior et pugnacior erit, in prima resistamus, antequam robur accipiat: alit se ipsa contentio et demissos altius tenet; facilius est se a certamine abstinere quam abducere.

(3.9) Studia quoque graviora iracundis omittenda sunt aut certe citra lassitudinem exercenda, et animus non inter dura versandus, sed artibus amoenis tradendus: lectio illum carminum obleniat et historia fabulis detineat; mollius delicatiusque tractetur. Pythagoras perturbationes animi

lyra componebat; quis autem ignorat lituos et tubas concitamenta esse, sicut quosdam cantus blandimenta quibus mens resoluatur? Confusis oculis prosunt virentia et quibusdam coloribus infirma acies adquiescit, quorundam splendore praestringitur: sic mentes aegras studia laeta permulcent. Forum aduocationes iudicia fugere debemus et omnia quae exulcerant vitium, aeque cavere lassitudinem corporis; consumit enim quidquid in nobis mite placidumque est et acria concitat.… Fames quoque et sitis ex isdem causis vitanda est: exasperat et incendit animos. Vetus dictum est a lasso rixam quaeri; aeque autem et ab esuriente et a sitiente et ab omni homine quem aliqua res urit. Nam ut ulcera ad levem tactum, deinde etiam ad suspicionem tactus condolescunt, ita animus adfectus minimis offenditur, adeo ut quosdam salutatio et epistula et oratio et interrogatio in litem evocent: numquam sine querella aegra tanguntur.

(3.10) Optimum est itaque ad primum mali sensum mederi sibi, tum verbis quoque suis minimum libertatis dare et inhibere impetum. Facile est autem adfectus suos, cum primum oriuntur, deprehendere: morborum signa praecurrunt. Quemadmodum tempestatis ac pluviae ante ipsas notae veniunt, ita irae amoris omniumque istarum procellarum animos vexantium sunt quaedam praenuntia. Qui comitiali vitio solent corripi iam adventare valetudinem intellegunt, si calor summa deseruit et incertum lumen nervorumque trepidatio est, si memoria sublabitur caputque versatur; solitis itaque remediis incipientem causam occupant, et odore gustuque quidquid est quod alienat animos repellitur, aut fomentis contra frigus rigoremque pugnatur; aut, si parum medicina profecit, vitaverunt turbam et sine teste ceciderunt.

Prodest morbum suum nosse et vires eius antequam spatientur opprimere. Videamus quid sit quod nos maxime concitet: alium verborum, alium rerum contumeliae movent; hic vult nobilitati, hic formae suae parci; hic elegantissimus haberi cupit, ille doctissimus; hic superbiae inpatiens est, hic contumaciae; ille servos non putat dignos quibus irascatur, hic intra domum saevus est, foris mitis; ille rogari iniuriam iudicat, hic non rogari contumeliam. Non omnes ab eadem parte feriuntur; scire itaque oportet quid in te inbecillum sit, ut id maxime protegas.

(3.11) Non expedit omnia videre, omnia audire. Multae nos iniuriae transeant, ex quibus plerasque non accipit qui nescit. Non vis esse iracundus? ne fueris curiosus. Qui inquirit quid in se dictum sit, qui

malignos sermones etiam si secreto habiti sunt eruit, se ipse inquietat. Quaedam interpretatio eo perducit ut videantur iniuriae; itaque alia differenda sunt, alia deridenda, alia donanda.

Circumscribenda multis modis ira est; pleraque in lusum iocumque vertantur. Socraten aiunt colapho percussum nihil amplius dixisse quam molestum esse quod nescirent homines quando cum galea prodire deberent. Non quemadmodum facta sit iniuria refert, sed quemadmodum lata.

Nec video quare difficilis sit moderatio, cum sciam tyrannorum quoque tumida et fortuna et licentia ingenia familiarem sibi saevitiam repressisse. Pisistratum certe, Atheniensium tyrannum, memoriae proditur, cum multa in crudelitatem eius ebrius conviva dixisset nec deessent qui vellent manus ei commodare et alius hinc alius illinc faces subderent, placido animo tulisse et hoc inritantibus respondisse, non magis illi se suscensere quam si quis obligatis oculis in se incucurrisset.

(3.13) Pugna tecum ipse: si <vis> vincere iram, non potest te illa. Incipis vincere, si absconditur, si illi exitus non datur. Signa eius obruamus et illam quantum fieri potest occultam secretamque teneamus. Cum magna id nostra molestia fiet (cupit enim exilire et incendere oculos et mutare faciem), sed si eminere illi extra nos licuit, supra nos est. In imo pectoris secessu recondatur, feraturque, non ferat. Immo in contrarium omnia eius indicia flectamus: vultus remittatur, vox lenior sit, gradus lentior; paulatim cum exterioribus interiora formantur.

In Socrate irae signum erat vocem summittere, loqui parcius; apparebat tunc illum sibi obstare. Deprendebatur itaque a familiaribus et coarguebatur, nec erat illi exprobratio latitantis irae ingrata. Quidni gauderet quod iram suam multi intellegerent, nemo sentiret? Sensissent autem, nisi ius amicis obiurgandi se dedisset, sicut ipse sibi in amicos sumpserat. Quanto magis hoc nobis faciendum est! Rogemus amicissimum quemque ut tunc maxime libertate adversus nos utatur cum minime illam pati poterimus, nec adsentiatur irae nostrae; contra [nos] potens malum et apud nos gratiosum, dum consipimus, dum nostri sumus, aduocemus. Qui vinum male ferunt et ebrietatis suae temeritatem ac petulantiam metuunt, mandant suis ut e convivio auferantur; intemperantiam in morbo suam experti parere ipsis in adversa valetudine vetant.

Optimum est notis vitiis inpedimenta prospicere et ante omnia ita componere animum ut etiam gravissimis rebus subitisque concussus iram aut non sentiat aut magnitudine inopinatae iniuriae exortam in altum

retrahat nec dolorem suum profiteatur. Id fieri posse apparebit, si pauca ex turba ingenti exempla protulero, ex quibus utrumque discere licet, quantum mali habeat ira ubi hominum praepotentium potestate tota utitur, quantum sibi imperare possit ubi metu maiore compressa est.

(3.14) Cambysen regem nimis deditum vino Praexaspes unus ex carissimis monebat ut parcius biberet, turpem esse dicens ebrietatem in rege, quem omnium oculi auresque sequerentur. Ad haec ille ‘ut scias’ inquit ‘quemadmodum numquam excidam mihi, adprobabo iam et oculos post vinum in officio esse et manus.’ Bibit deinde liberalius quam alias capacioribus scyphis et iam gravis ac vinolentus obiurgatoris sui filium procedere ultra limen iubet adlevataque super caput sinistra manu stare. Tunc intendit arcum et ipsum cor adulescentis (id enim petere se dixerat) figit rescissoque pectore haerens in ipso corde spiculum ostendit ac respiciens patrem interrogavit satisne certam haberet manum. At ille negavit Apollinem potuisse certius mittere. Di illum male perdant animo magis quam condicione mancipium! eius rei laudator fuit cuius nimis erat spectatorem fuisse.… Videbimus quomodo se pater gerere debuerit stans super cadaver fili sui caedemque illam cuius et testis fuerat et causa: id de quo nunc agitur apparet, iram supprimi posse.

(3.15) Non dubito quin Harpagus quoque tale aliquid regi suo Persarumque suaserit, quo offensus liberos illi epulandos adposuit et subinde quaesiit an placeret conditura; deinde, ut satis illum plenum malis suis vidit, adferri capita illorum iussit et quomodo esset acceptus interrogavit. Non defuerunt misero verba, non os concurrit: ‘apud regem’ inquit ‘omnis cena iucunda est.’ Quid hac adulatione profecit? ne ad reliquias invitaretur.

Non veto patrem damnare regis sui factum, non veto quaerere dignam tam truci portento poenam, sed hoc interim colligo, posse etiam ex ingentibus malis nascentem iram abscondi et ad verba contraria sibi cogi. Necessaria ista est doloris refrenatio, utique hoc sortitis vitae genus et ad regiam adhibitis mensam: sic estur apud illos, sic bibitur, sic respondetur; funeribus suis adridendum est.

(3.18.3) Quid antiqua perscrutor? modo C. Caesar Sex. Papinium, cui pater erat consularis, Betilienum Bassum quaestorem suum, procuratoris sui filium, aliosque et senatores et equites Romanos uno die flagellis cecidit, torsit, non quaestionis sed animi causa; deinde adeo inpatiens fuit

differendae voluptatis, quam ingentem crudelitas eius sine dilatione poscebat, ut in xysto maternorum hortorum (qui porticum a ripa separat) inambulans quosdam ex illis cum matronis atque aliis senatoribus ad lucernam decollaret. Quid instabat? Quod periculum aut privatum aut publicum una nox minabatur? Quantulum fuit lucem expectare denique, ne senatores populi Romani soleatus occideret!

(3.19) Quam superba fuerit crudelitas eius ad rem pertinet scire, quamquam aberrare alicui possimus videri et in devium exire; sed hoc ipsum pars erit irae super solita saevientis. Ceciderat flagellis senatores: ipse effecit ut dici posset ‘solet fieri’. Torserat per omnia quae in rerum natura tristissima sunt, fidiculis talaribus, eculeo igne vultu suo. Et hoc loco respondebitur: ‘magnam rem! si tres senatores quasi nequam mancipia inter verbera et flammas divisit homo qui de toto senatu trucidando cogitabat, qui optabat ut populus Romanus unam cervicem haberet, ut scelera sua tot locis ac temporibus diducta in unum ictum et unum diem cogeret.’ . . . Adicere his longum est quod patres quoque occisorum eadem nocte dimissis per domos centurionibus confecit, id est, homo misericors luctu liberavit. Non enim Gai saevitiam sed irae propositum est describere, quae non tantum viritim furit sed gentes totas lancinat, sed urbes et flumina et tuta ab omni sensu doloris converberat.

(3.20) Sic rex Persarum totius populi nares recidit in Syria, unde Rhinocolura loco nomen est. Pepercisse illum iudicas quod non tota capita praecidit? novo genere poenae delectatus est.

(3.22) Et haec cogitanda sunt exempla quae vites, et illa ex contrario quae sequaris, moderata, lenia, quibus nec ad irascendum causa defuit nec ad ulciscendum potestas. Quid enim facilius fuit Antigono quam duos manipulares duci iubere, qui incumbentes regis tabernaculo faciebant quod homines et periculosissime et libentissime faciunt, de rege suo male existimabant? Audierat omnia Antigonus, utpote cum inter dicentes et audientem palla interesset; quam ille leviter commovit et ‘longius’ inquit ‘discedite, ne vos rex audiat.’

(3.24.2) Quid est quare ego servi mei clarius responsum et contumaciorem vultum et non peruenientem usque ad meam murmurationem flagellis et compedibus expiem? Quis sum, cuius aures laedi nefas sit? Ignoverunt multi hostibus: ego non ignoscam pigris neglegentibus garrulis? . . . Amicus est: fecit quod noluit; inimicus: fecit

quod debuit. Prudentiori credamus, stultiori remittamus; pro quocumque illud nobis respondeamus, sapientissimos quoque viros multa delinquere, neminem esse tam circumspectum cuius non diligentia aliquando sibi ipsa excidat, neminem tam maturum cuius non gravitatem in aliquod fervidius factum casus inpingat, neminem tam timidum offensarum qui non in illas dum vitat incidat.

(3.26) ‘Non possum’ inquis ‘pati; grave est iniuriam sustinere.’ Mentiris; quis enim iniuriam non potest ferre qui potest iram? Adice nunc quod id agis ut et iram feras et iniuriam. Quare fers aegri rabiem et phrenetici verba, puerorum protervas manus? nempe quia videntur nescire quid faciant. Quid interest quo quisque vitio fiat inprudens? inprudentia par in omnibus patrocinium est. ‘Quid ergo?’ inquis ‘inpune illi erit?’ Puta velle te, tamen non erit; maxima est enim factae iniuriae poena fecisse, nec quisquam gravius adficitur quam qui ad supplicium paenitentiae traditur.

Deinde ad condicionem rerum humanarum respiciendum est, ut omnium accidentium aequi iudices simus; iniquus autem est qui commune vitium singulis obiecit.… Omnes inconsulti et inprovidi sumus, omnes incerti queruli ambitiosi—quid lenioribus verbis ulcus publicum abscondo?—omnes mali sumus. Quidquid itaque in alio reprenditur, id unusquisque in sinu suo inveniet. Quid illius pallorem, illius maciem notas? pestilentia est. Placidiores itaque invicem simus: mali inter malos vivimus. Una nos res facere quietos potest, mutuae facilitatis conventio. ‘Ille iam mihi nocuit, ego illi nondum.’ Sed iam aliquem fortasse laesisti, sed laedes. Noli aestimare hanc horam aut hunc diem, totum inspice mentis tuae habitum: etiam si nihil mali fecisti, potes facere.

(3.28) Huic irasceris, deinde illi; servis, deinde libertis; parentibus, deinde liberis; notis, deinde ignotis: ubique enim causae supersunt nisi deprecator animus accessit. Hinc te illo furor rapiet, illinc alio, et novis subinde inritamentis orientibus continuabitur rabies: age, infelix, ecquando amabis? O quam bonum tempus in re mala perdis! Quanto nunc erat satius amicos parare, inimicos mitigare, rem publicam administrare, transferre in res domesticas operam, quam circumspicere quid alicui facere possis mali, quod aut dignitati eius aut patrimonio aut corpori vulnus infligas, cum id tibi contingere sine certamine ac periculo non possit, etiam si cum inferiore concurses!

(3.33) Circa pecuniam plurimum vociferationis est: haec fora defetigat, patres liberosque committit, venena miscet, gladios tam percussoribus quam legionibus tradit; haec est sanguine nostro dilibuta; propter hanc uxorum maritorumque noctes strepunt litibus et tribunalia magistratuum premit turba, reges saeviunt rapiuntque et civitates longo saeculorum labore constructas evertunt ut aurum argentumque in cinere urbium scrutentur. Libet intueri fiscos in angulo iacentis: hi sunt propter quos oculi clamore exprimantur, fremitu iudiciorum basilicae resonent, evocati ex longinquis regionibus iudices sedeant iudicaturi utrius iustior avaritia sit. Quid si ne propter fiscum quidem sed pugnum aeris aut inputatum a servo denarium senex sine herede moriturus stomacho dirrumpitur? Quid si propter usuram vel milesimam valetudinarius fenerator distortis pedibus et manibus ad computandum non relictis clamat ac per vadimonia asses suos in ipsis morbi accessionibus vindicat? Si totam mihi ex omnibus metallis quae cum maxime deprimimus pecuniam proferas, si in medium proicias quidquid thesauri tegunt, avaritia iterum sub terras referente quae male egesserat, omnem istam congeriem non putem dignam quae frontem viri boni contrahat. Quanto risu prosequenda sunt quae nobis lacrimas educunt!

(3.34) Cedo nunc, persequere cetera, cibos potiones horumque causa paratas in ambitionem munditias, verba contumeliosa, motus corporum parum honorificos, contumacia iumenta et pigra mancipia, et suspiciones et interpretationes malignasvocis alienae, quibus efficitur ut inter iniurias naturae numeretur sermo homini datus: crede mihi, levia sunt propter quae non leviter excandescimus qualiaque pueros in rixam et iurgium concitant. Nihil ex iis quae tam tristes agimus serium est, nihil magnum: inde, inquam, vobis ira et insania est, quod exigua magno aestimatis.

(3.36) Omnes sensus perducendi sunt ad firmitatem; natura patientes sunt, si animus illos desit corrumpere, qui cotidie ad rationem reddendam vocandus est. Faciebat hoc Sextius, ut consummato die, cum se ad nocturnam quietem recepisset, interrogaret animum suum: ‘quod hodie malum tuum sanasti? Cui vitio obstitisti? Qua parte melior es?’ Desinet ira et moderatior erit quae sciet sibi cotidie ad iudicem esse veniendum. Quicquam ergo pulchrius hac consuetudine excutiendi totum diem? Qualis ille somnus post recognitionem sui sequitur, quam tranquillus, quam altus ac liber, cum aut laudatus est animus aut admonitus et speculator sui censorque secretus cognovit de moribus suis! Utor hac potestate et cotidie apud me causam dico. Cum sublatum e conspectu

lumen est et conticuit uxor moris iam mei conscia, totum diem meum scrutor factaque ac dicta mea remetior; nihil mihi ipse abscondo, nihil transeo. Quare enim quicquam ex erroribus meis timeam, cum possim dicere: ‘vide ne istud amplius facias, nunc tibi ignosco. In illa disputatione pugnacius locutus es: noli postea congredi cum imperitis; nolunt discere qui numquam didicerunt. Illum liberius admonuisti quam debebas, itaque non emendasti sed offendisti: de cetero vide, [ne] non tantum an verum sit quod dicis, sed an ille cui dicitur veri patiens sit: admoneri bonus gaudet, pessimus quisque rectorem asperrime patitur. (3.37) In convivio quorundam te sales et in dolorem tuum iacta verba tetigerunt: vitare vulgares convictus memento; solutior est post vinum licentia, quia ne sobriis quidem pudor est. Iratum vidisti amicum tuum ostiario causidici alicuius aut divitis quod intrantem summoverat, et ipse pro illo iratus extremo mancipio fuisti: irasceris ergo catenario cani? et hic, cum multum latravit, obiecto cibo mansuescit. Recede longius et ride!

‘Nunc iste se aliquem putat quod custodit litigatorum turba limen obsessum; nunc ille qui intra iacet felix fortunatusque est et beati hominis iudicat ac potentis indicium difficilem ianuam: nescit durissimum esse ostium carceris. Praesume animo multa tibi esse patienda: numquis se hieme algere miratur, numquis in mari nausiare, in via concuti? Fortis est animus ad quae praeparatus venit. Minus honorato loco positus irasci coepisti convivatori,vocatori, ipsi qui tibi praeferebatur: demens, quid interest quam lecti premas partem? honestiorem te aut turpiorem potest facere pulvinus? Non aequis quendam oculis vidisti, quia de ingenio tuo male locutus est: recipis hanc legem?

(3.38) Contumeliam tibi fecit aliquis: numquid maiorem quam Diogeni philosopho Stoico, cui de ira cum maxime disserenti adulescens protervus inspuit? Tulit hoc ille leniter et sapienter: ‘non quidem’ inquit ‘irascor, sed dubito tamen an oporteat irasci.’

(3.42) Careamus hoc malo purgemusque mentem et exstirpemus radicitus quae quamvis tenuia undecumque haeserint renascentur, et iram non temperemus sed ex toto removeamus—quod enim malae rei temperamentum est? Poterimus autem, adnitamur modo.

Nec ulla res magis proderit quam cogitatio mortalitatis. Sibi quisque atque alteri dicat: ‘quid iuvat tamquam in aeternum genitos iras indicere et brevissimam aetatem dissipare? Quid iuvat dies quos in voluptatem

honestam inpendere licet in dolorem alicuius tormentumque transferre? Non capiunt res istae iacturam nec tempus vacat perdere. Quid ruimus in pugnam? Quid certamina nobis arcessimus? Quid inbecillitatis obliti ingentia odia suscipimus et ad frangendum fragiles consurgimus? Iam istas inimicitias quas inplacabili gerimus animo febris aut aliquod aliud malum corporis vetabit geri; iam par acerrimum media mors dirimet. Quid tumultuamur et vitam seditiosi conturbamus? stat supra caput fatum et pereuntis dies inputat propiusque ac propius accedit; istud tempus quod alienae destinas morti fortasse circa tuam est. (3.43) Quin potius vitam brevem colligis placidamque et tibi et ceteris praestas? Quin potius amabilem te dum vivis omnibus, desiderabilem cum excesseris reddis? Quid illum nimis ex alto tecum agentem detrahere cupis? Quid illum oblatrantem tibi, humilem quidem et contemptum sed superioribus acidum ac molestum, exterere viribus tuis temptas? Quid servo, quid domino, quid regi, quid clienti tuo irasceris? Sustine paulum: venit ecce mors quae vos pares faciat.

Videre solemus inter matutina harenae spectacula tauri et ursi pugnam inter se conligatorum, quos, cum alter alterum vexarunt, suus confector expectat: idem facimus, aliquem nobiscum adligatum lacessimus, cum victo victorique finis et quidem maturus immineat. Quieti potius pacatique quantulumcumque superest exigamus; nulli cadaver nostrum iaceat invisum.

Saepe rixam conclamatum in vicinia incendium solvit et interventus ferae latronem viatoremque diducit: conluctari cum minoribus malis non vacat, ubi metus maior apparuit. Quid nobis cum dimicatione et insidiis? Numquid amplius isti cui irasceris quam mortem optas? etiam te quiescente morietur. Perdis operam, si facere vis quod futurum est.… Sive de ultimis suppliciis cogitas sive de levioribus, quantulum est temporis quo aut ille poena sua torqueatur aut tu malum gaudium ex aliena percipias!

Iam istum spiritum expuemus. Interim, dum trahimus, dum inter homines sumus, colamus humanitatem; non timori cuiquam, non periculo simus; detrimenta iniurias, convicia vellicationes contemnamus et magno animo brevia feramus incommoda: dum respicimus, quod aiunt, versamusque nos, iam mortalitas aderit.

# NOTES

1. To judge by its meter and diction, this seems to be a quote from a lost tragic drama.
2. The reference seems to be to enslavement of prisoners of war, but perhaps the property seizures carried out by the Julio-Claudian emperors is also hinted at (*capita* here can mean both “lives” and “estates”).
3. Seneca here imagines the torches and campfires of a besieging army.
4. The reference is to crucifixion generally, a common mode of execution under the Roman empire. Jesus had been crucified only a decade or so before Seneca began writing *On Anger*, and Christianity was as yet barely known in Rome, if at all.
5. Here, and throughout this volume, the gaps between chapter numbers at the start of paragraphs indicate that some chapters have been omitted. An ellipsis within a paragraph, as in 1.12 below, also indicates an omission.
6. The “overseer” (the Latin word is closer to “steersman”) here is Reason, as becomes clearer in what follows. Reason is capitalized in this text as a way to stress the importance Seneca gave to this faculty; he, and his fellow Stoics, regarded it as a divine element in human nature, bestowed by the larger Reason governing the universe.
7. Seneca’s essays are sometimes termed dialogues because they bring on anonymous speakers, like this one, to interrupt, challenge, or refute the main speaking voice.
8. The Latin sentence that follows, omitted from this set of excerpts, contains an unusually strong gender bias: Seneca states that the sort of mental collapse he describes here is often seen in women. Excising this sentence runs the risk of whitewashing Seneca’s sexism, or that of Roman writers generally, who were overwhelmingly males addressing themselves to other males. In the context of the “How to” series, this editor felt that a stress on the universality of Stoic principles was appropriate, and that Seneca deserved to have his own advice put into practice: “It is not to your benefit to see and hear everything” (3.11 below). For the same reason, Seneca’s masculine singular pronouns, in discussions of his imagined reader or exemplar, have often been converted here into ungendered plurals. It will be noted, however, that in the next included sentence above, Seneca casts his ethical role model as a Roman *man*, as he did throughout his writings.
9. *irrogata*, Madvig’s emendation.
10. A line from an early Roman tragedy, allegedly quoted by the emperor Caligula, whose nightmarish reign preceded *On Anger* by only a few years. Caligula is referred to explicitly just below (though Seneca calls him by his true name, Gaius Caesar; here, his more familiar nickname is used).
11. The quote is not found in the extant books of the historian Livy.
12. Spoken by Ajax to Odysseus as the two wrestle for the armor of Achilles. *Iliad* 23.724 (quoted by Seneca in Greek).
13. Caligula was assassinated by a conspiracy of senators and guardsmen in AD 41.
14. Roman elites sometimes had trees planted on the rooftops of their homes.
15. In the administrative system of Seneca’s day, proconsuls drawn from the Senate were assigned governorships of vast territories of the empire.
16. That is, to produce eunuchs who might guard a king’s wives or harem.
17. This rather banal anecdote may be Seneca’s invention; we never hear elsewhere of Plato rearing a ward.

18. A metaphor from the law courts, equivalent to “we must give our foes the benefit of every doubt.”
19. Snow, fetched from the mountains by runners, was used in wealthy households to cool beverages.
20. That is, innocence according to the letter of the law.
21. An interesting, and perhaps self-revealing, example; Seneca seems to imply that wronging someone could be excused if it were done out of a need for advancement.
22. The language suggests an analogy with silver coins that grow tarnished with disuse.
23. Seneca shared the views of his times regarding the inferior capacity of women to make moral choices. The phrase “She’s a woman” here could also be taken to mean “She’s your wife.”
24. The sentiment here coheres with Seneca’s strikingly compliant attitude at 2.33 and 3.15 below, and with his own comportment at Nero’s court.
25. That is, he’s bound to be caught and punished later even if let off the hook now. Such consolations show Seneca diverging from moral philosophy into more pedestrian ways of thinking.
26. The idea that the wrongdoer harms himself more than he harms others was common to several philosophic schools.
27. Quintus Fabius Maximus, a Roman general of the third century BC, was famed for his strategy of delaying battle in dealing with Hannibal’s invasion of Italy.
28. The Stoic practice of *praemeditatio malorum*, preparing for future ills by imagining them before they arrive, was one that Seneca often counseled.
29. An acrobatic sport that involved somersaulting over bulls is often depicted in ancient art and mentioned by other sources.
30. Seneca would later compose a long treatise on giving and receiving, *De Beneficiis* (*On Benefits*) exploring the moral codes governing exchange.
31. A Stoic practitioner and senator of the first century BC, often revered by Seneca as the most morally wise man since Socrates.
32. Caligula, a dandified young man himself, reportedly resented all those whose beauty or finery outshone his own.
33. Spoken with withering sarcasm. Seneca himself apparently aroused Caligula’s jealousy on account of his eloquence and narrowly escaped the executioner’s blade.
34. During Sulla’s military rule over Rome, in the 80s BC, foes of the regime were eliminated by a kind of blacklisting called proscription, and the children of those victims were stripped of citizens’ rights.
35. The primary referents here are the Gauls, who at one time fought fiercely against Roman dominion but were later pacified and made Roman citizens; but a similar strategy of absorption by grant of citizenship was applied elsewhere too.
36. Seneca had earlier caricatured the physical effects of anger in his opening paragraph.
37. Probably referring to the Furies or the Dirae, underworld goddesses depicted in myth as sources of human discord.
38. The first of the following quotes cannot be fully identified, though it certainly comes from an epic poem. The second is found at 8.702 of the *Aeneid*, one of many passages in which Vergil imagines underworld forces stirring up human strife.
39. Sextius was a Roman Stoic philosopher of the first century BC.
40. In the myths of the Trojan War, Ajax became enraged after losing to Odysseus in a rigged wrestling match for the armor of Achilles (see note 12 above). He planned to assassinate the officers who had conspired to cheat him, but Athena drove him temporarily mad such that he instead killed a herd of cattle. When he recovered his senses, his shame drove him to suicide.
41. Democritus, a Greek philosopher of the fifth century BC, is best known today for his theory that all matter is made of atoms.

42. Marcus Caelius Rufus was a contemporary of Cicero in the century before Seneca's, and the subject of Cicero's surving speech *Pro Caelio*.
43. The benefits of *otium*, freedom from the stresses of business and public affairs, are a constant theme in Seneca's writings.
44. Importantly, Seneca recognizes that even the best natures will feel the first stirrings of anger. It's how they react to those stirrings that counts.
45. The reference is to epilepsy. Seneca actually calls it *comitialis vitium* or "the assemblyman's disease" because its appearance in an assembly meeting required immediate dismissal.
46. Cambyses, son of Cyrus the Great, ruled the Persian empire in the late sixth century BC. Seneca takes the story that follows from book 3 of Herodotus's *Histories*.
47. Seneca never makes good on this promise in his extant writings. He seems pained here by Prexaspes' passivity, in contrast to 2.33 above, where he praised Pastor for similarly accepting his son's murder. Perhaps he had no solution to a dilemma that also cropped up in his own relations with Caligula and Nero.
48. A high official of the Median empire in the sixth century BC, and a servant to King Astyages. This story, like the previous one, comes from Herodotus's *Histories*. Harpagus had offended the king by covertly preserving the life of an infant whom Astyages had ordered killed. The cannibal feast by which Harpagus was punished closely resembles the one Seneca would later dramatize in his tragedy *Thyestes*.
49. This remarkable passage is followed by an even more startling one, omitted here, in which Seneca recommends suicide for those subjected to cruel masters. Passive acceptance was not his entire solution to the problem of despotism, though it is foregrounded here since it entails suppression of anger.
50. If our dating of *On Anger* is accurate, this episode—not otherwise attested—took place about a decade before Seneca wrote about it.
51. Seneca writes as though he expects his readers to be familiar with the property. Caligula's mother was Agrippina the Elder, granddaughter of Augustus.
52. Rhinocolura means "Nose-clip" in Greek, and the colorful name is presumably the origin of the story Seneca tells here; no other source gives any information about the Persian king (perhaps Cambyses?) or the Syrians he allegedly punished.
53. A Macedonian leader who rose to prominence, and gained a crown, in the late fourth century BC, during the wars of succession after the death of Alexander the Great.
54. As has been noted, Seneca's positive anecdotes, illustrating patience and calmmindedness, are less compelling than his tales of rage and cruelty, and this volume makes sparing use of them.
55. See note 24 above.
56. The denarius was the standard unit of currency in the Roman empire. A Roman infantry soldier was paid about 4.5 denarii per week in Seneca's day.
57. Seneca's professed disdain for wealth rings hollow when one considers his own vast fortune, allegedly increased by his aggressive money-lending practices.
58. See note 39 above.
59. Seneca is extremely vague about his family life in all his writings. In later essays he refers to a noblewoman named Paulina as his wife, a woman much younger than himself, but he may have been married more than once.
60. The Roman system of patronage meant that wealthy and influential individuals, who had the ability to help others, had a constant stream of clients waiting outside their doors seeking favors.
61. It's not clear at what point the speech Seneca makes to himself, starting at 3.36, ends and a more generalized address to the Roman reader takes over. By the end of the speech, we are clearly no longer hearing Seneca talking to himself but the voice of the essayist talking to his public.

62. Not the famous Diogenes, the Cynic, but Diogenes of Babylon, who headed the Stoic school in the second century BC. Like many of the anecdotes illustrating patience in this work, this one is unattested elsewhere.